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CROSBY'S  
PARLIAMENTARY RECORD.



CROSBY'S  
PARLIAMENTARY RECORD,

DEBATES IN THE LORDS AND COMMONS

ON THE CORN LAWS,

IN THE MEMORABLE SESSION OF 1846.

VOL. II.



LEEDS:

PUBLISHED BY GEORGE CROSBY, QUEEN'S PLACE.

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## SUCCINCT HISTORY OF THE CORN LAWS.

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In the following sketch of this important subject, we shall give a history of the successive regulations under which the trade in corn has been placed by our legislature, at different periods. In the 13th century we find the prices of wheat had become an object of attention, and in a statute entitled "Judicium Pillorie," about 1266, Henry III., directions were given to the authorities of towns to "inquire the price of wheat, that is, to wit, how a quarter of the best wheat was sold the last market day."

In 1360, the exportation of corn was prohibited by Statute 34 Edw. III., c. 20. In 1393, corn might be exported by the king's subjects "to what parts that please them," except to the king's enemies. In those early times sufficient grain was grown in England to admit of exportation.

In 1436, the exportation of wheat was allowed without the king's licence, when the price per quarter at the place of shipment was 6s. 8d. About 1460 the first symptom of a Corn Law occurs for the protection of the home grower from the effects of an over supply of foreign grain. The importation from other countries gave rise to complaints, which were followed by a statute passed in 1463, by which it was enacted, that wheat should not be imported unless the price at the place of import exceeded 6s. 8d. per quarter. Up to this time the importation of corn had not been prohibited, or subject to restriction. The commercial policy, at this period, was directed to the object of preserving as much food as possible in the country; hence in 1533 it was forbidden to export corn and provisions without the king's license.

In 1554 another act was passed, which restored the freedom of export so long as wheat should not exceed 6s. 8d. per quarter; when above 6s. 8d., exportation was to cease; and when it was under that price, it could not be exported to any foreign country, or to Scotland, without a licence, under penalty of forfeiting double the value of the cargo, as well as the vessel, besides imprisonment of the master and mariners of the vessel for one year. In 1562 it was enacted, that wheat might be exported when the average price was 10s. per quarter.

In 1660, a new scale of duties was introduced: when the price of wheat was under 44s. per quarter, the export duty was 5s. 6d., and when the price was above 44s., the duty rose to 6s. 8d. Exportation

was permitted free whenever the price did not fall below 53s. 4d. In 1670, exportation was permitted when the price was at or above 53s. 4d., the customs' duty being only 1s. per quarter. When the price fell below 53s. 4d., importation being 16s. when the price in this country was at or above 53s. 4d.; and 8s. when above that price, and under 53s. 4d.; the latter price importation became free.

In 1772, an act was passed relating to the internal corn trade, several ancient restrictions in old statutes were removed, on the ground that, "by preventing a free trade in corn, &c., they have a tendency to discourage the growth, and enhance the price of the same, which statutes, put into execution, would bring great distress on the inhabitants of many parts of the kingdom."

In 1791, the act authorised a bounty of 5s. per quarter to be paid when wheat was under 44s., and when above 66s. exportation was to cease. The new scale of import duties was:—for wheat under 50s. per quarter, the "high duty" of 24s. 3d.; at 50s., but under 54s., the first "low duty" of 2s. 6d.; at, or above 54s., the "second low duty" of 6d. was payable. The protecting price was thus raised from 48s. to 54s. the quarter.

From 1791 to 1804, forms a very eventful period in the history of the Corn Laws. Under the comparatively free system established by the act of 1791, the excess of imports had been comparatively trifling; but under an act expressly constructed to prevent importation as much as possible, the excess of imports in the thirteen years from 1791 to 1803, amounted to 6,458,901 quarters of wheat and wheat flour. The seasons operated against the acts of the legislature, and the dependence on foreign supplies was never so great as at the very period when hopes had been entertained that the produce of the home grower would prove ample for the wants of the country.

In 1804, Parliament appointed a Select Committee to inquire into the principle and operation of the Corn Regulation Act of 1791, and to determine whether the scale which it fixed for the regulation of imports and exports was now applicable. Their report was:—"It appears to your Committee that the price of corn from 1791 to the harvest of 1803, has been very irregular; but on an average, increased in a great degree by the years of scarcity, has in general yielded a fair profit to the grower. The casual high prices, however, have had the effect of stimulating industry, and bringing into culture large tracts of waste lands, which, combined with the two last productive seasons, has occasioned such a depression in the value of grain, as it is feared will greatly tend to the discouragement of agriculture, unless maintained by the support of Parliament." At the recommendation of the Committee, the following scale was submitted and adopted by Parliament:—On wheat under 63s. per quarter, the "high duty" of 24s. 3d. was payable; at 63s. and under 66s., the "first low duty;" and at or above 66s., the "second low duty," which amounted only to 6d. The free import, or nominal duty price, was thus raised from 54s. (at which it stood in the act of 1791) to 66s., an increase of 12s. The bounty of 5s. on exportation was to be paid when the average price was at or under 48s.; and when the average rose to 54s., exportation to be prohibited. After

act the price rose from 49s. 6d. to 86s. 2d. per ch prices stimulated cultivation, and from 1804 the number of inclosure bills which received the as 1084, being considerably more than for any other period.

or two of low prices of agricultural produce again brought a close another period in the history of the Corn Laws. Wheat, which had been sold as high as 180s. the quarter (for select parcels) in 1812, fell to 73s. 6d., after the abundant harvest of 1813; and after that of 1814, which was rather favourable than otherwise, the average price was reduced to 53s. 7d. the quarter. This fall in prices and the cessation of hostilities led to the reconsideration of the whole question of the Corn Law.

During the present period an important change was made in the mode of striking the average prices of corn and grain. The twelve maritime districts of England, and the four similar districts of Scotland, ceased to be regarded as sixteen separate sections, each of which was regulated by the prices prevalent within its separate limits: but for England, the averages, taken as before, were computed for the whole of the twelve districts at once, and the average price obtained from the computation regulated importation and exportation at sea-ports situate in any part of the country; and for Scotland the same plan was pursued. The six weeks' averages, struck quarterly, regulated the import-duty, and the weekly average the exports.

In 1806 was passed "An Act to permit the free 'nterchange of every Species of Grain between Great Britain and Ireland." Ireland had been previously treated as a colony, but this act placed her on an equality with other parts of the kingdom, and, for oats, has rendered Ireland the granary of England.

The Corn Law of 1815 originated in the desire to preserve, during a state of peace, the high rents and prices which had existed during the war. The war had been a period of scarcity, arising from various causes, and the real effect of this measure was to perpetuate the high prices and high rents by an artificial scarcity. On the 10th of June, 1814, a Committee of the House of Lords on the corn-trade was appointed, which made a brief report on the 27th, when the Committee was instructed to examine witnesses in support of allegations contained in petitions presented to the House on the subject. The principal feature of the second report was the recommendation of the Committee that so long as the average price of wheat was under 80s. the ports should be completely closed against supplies from other countries. The prohibitive price suggested by the agricultural witnesses examined by the Committee varied from 72s. to 96s. Out of sixteen witnesses belonging to this class, only four were in favour of the free importation price being below 80s. per quarter. This second report was presented on the 25th of July; but the attempt to give so complete a monopoly as would have been established by carrying out the recommendations of the Lords' Committee was so resolutely opposed by the country that the bill which

had been brought in for the purpose, was abandoned. An act was however passed, repealing the bounty on exportation,\* which had been allowed under various circumstances since 1688, though, from 1792, the high prices which prevailed in the home market rendered it inoperative. By the new act exportation might take place at any time without reference to prevailing prices.

The average price of wheat for the year 1814 was about 34s. per quarter lower than the average of the preceding year, though the harvest had not been an abundant one. In the month of February, 1815, the average price was under 60s., and before harvest it might rise to 66s., when the ports would be open and prices again be depressed, and it was thought to a very low point, in consequence of the obstacles to free intercourse with the Continent being removed. Early in the session of 1815, therefore, a bill was brought in, giving effect to the recommendation of the Committee of the previous year, and fixing 80s. as the lowest point at which importation could take place. The measure produced great excitement throughout the country, particularly in the manufacturing districts and in all the large towns. In the House of Commons, at an early period, a division took place in favour of 72s. being substituted for 80s., with the following result:—For the motion 35; against it 154, —majority 119. On the 3rd of March an attempt was made to throw out the bill:—For the motion 56; against it 218; majority 162. On the 6th of March the vicinity of the House of Commons was thronged by an excited multitude, and several members were stopped, some of them roughly handled, and they were questioned by the mob as to the vote which they intended to give. Ultimately the military were called out, and, with the civil force, kept the streets clear. This evening the gallery of the House of Commons was closed. An attempt was made to render the bill more favourable by substituting 74s. instead of 80s. as the pivot price; and the motion was supported by 77 against 208, being a majority of 131. On the 8th of May, on bringing up the report, an amendment was moved, that the bill be read that day six months, when there voted 50 in its favour, and 168 against it; majority 118. A final attempt was made to substitute a lower rate than 80s., leaving it to the House to determine the exact price at which prohibition ceased: but only 78 voted for the motion, and 184 in favour of the measure as originally proposed. On the 10th of March, on the third reading, an amendment was moved, that the bill be thrown out, but it was only supported by 77 against 245; majority 168. On the 20th of March the bill passed the Lords by a majority of 107:—128 contents, and 21 non-contents. The measure was opposed with great force and acuteness by several eminent statesmen of the day; and Lord Grenville drew up a protest embodying the views of the leaders of the minority. We give a copy of this historical document:—

#### “ Protest.

“ 1. Because we are adverse in principle to all new restraints on commerce. We think it certain that public prosperity is best pro-

\* 54 Geo. III., c. 69.

moted by leaving uncontrolled the free current of national industry ; and we wish, rather, by well-considered steps, to bring back our commercial legislation to the straight and simple line of wisdom, than to increase the deviation, by subjecting additional and extensive branches of the public interest to fresh systems of artificial and injurious restriction.

“ 2. Because we think that the great practical rule of leaving our commerce unfettered applies more peculiarly, and on still stronger grounds of justice, as well as of policy, to the corn-trade, than to any other. Irresistible, indeed, must be the necessity which could, in our judgment, authorise the legislature to tamper with the sustenance of the people, and to impede the free purchase and sale of that article on which depends the existence of so large a portion of the community.

“ 3. Because we think that the expectations of ultimate benefit from this measure are founded on a delusive theory. We cannot persuade ourselves that this law will ever contribute to produce plenty, cheapness, or steadiness of price. So long as it operates at all, its effects must be the opposite of these. Monopoly is the parent of scarcity, of dearness, and of uncertainty. To cut off any of the sources of supply can only tend to lessen its abundance ; to close against ourselves the cheapest market for any commodity must enhance the price at which we purchase it ; and to confine the consumer of corn to the produce of his own country is to refuse to ourselves the benefit of that provision which Providence itself has made for equalising to man the variations of season and of climate.

“ 4. But, whatever may be the future consequences of this law, at some distant and uncertain period, we see, with pain, that those hopes must be purchased at the expense of a great and present evil. To compel the consumer to purchase corn dearer at home than it might be imported from abroad is the immediate practical effect of this law. In this way alone can it operate. Its present protection, its promised extension of agriculture, must result (if at all) from the profits which it creates by keeping up the price of corn to an artificial level. These future benefits are the consequences expected, but, as we confidently believe, erroneously expected, from giving a bounty to the grower of corn, by a tax levied on its consumer.

“ 5. Because we think that the adoption of any permanent law for such a purpose required the fullest and most laborious investigation. Nor would it have been sufficient for our satisfaction could we have been convinced of the general policy of so hazardous an experiment. A still further inquiry would have been necessary to persuade us that the present moment was fit for its adoption. In such an inquiry we must have had the means of satisfying ourselves what its immediate operation will be, as connected with the various and pressing circumstances of public difficulty and distress with which the country is now surrounded ; with the state of circulation and currency ; of our agriculture and manufactures ; of our internal and external commerce ; and, above all, with the condition and reward of the industrious labouring classes of our community. On all these particulars, as they respect this question, we think that parliament is almost wholly uninformed ; on all, we see reason for

the utmost anxiety and alarm from the operation of this law.

“Lastly. Because, if we could approve of the principle and purpose of this law, we think that no sufficient foundation has been laid for its details. The evidence before us, unsatisfactory and imperfect as it is, seems to us rather to disprove than to support the propriety of the high price adopted as the standard of importation, and the fallacious mode by which that price is to be ascertained.

“And on all these grounds we are anxious to record our dissent from a measure so precipitate in its course, and, as we fear, so injurious in its consequences.

“AUGUSTUS FREDERICK  
(Duke of Sussex),  
WILLIAM FREDERICK  
(Duke of Gloucester),  
GRENVILLE,  
WELLESLEY,  
ESSEX,

“TORRINGTON,  
DUTTON (Marquis of Douglas),  
CHANDOS BUCKINGHAM,  
MONTFORT,  
KING,  
CARLISLE.”

On the 23rd of March the bill received the Royal assent.

Until the average price of wheat rose to 80s. the ports were to be effectually closed. Colonial wheat was admitted when the average prices reached 67s. per quarter. Such was the leading feature of the new act.\* But the mode in which the average prices were determined greatly increased its stringency. A new average was to be struck quarterly, on the 15th of February, May, August, and November, from the aggregate prices of the six preceding weeks; but it was provided that, if during the six weeks subsequent to any of these dates the average prices, which might be at 80s., fell below that price, no supplies should be admitted for home consumption from any ports between the rivers Eyder and the Bidassoa,—that is, from Denmark to Spain.

It was the general expectation of the farmers that the act of 1815 would maintain the prices of their produce at a rate somewhat under that of the scale which the legislature had adopted; and which, for wheat, was 80s.; barley 40s.; oats 27s.; and rye, beans, and peas, 53s. They entered into contracts with their landlords and others with this conviction. But, as in every measure passed since 1773 prices had risen above the scale which had been fixed as the prohibitive rate, it happened that they now sunk below it to an extent which they had not anticipated. In 1816, 1817, and 1818, three deficient harvests occurred, that of the former year being below an average crop to a greater extent than in any year since the periods of scarcity at the close of the last century. Prices rose above the rate at which foreign supplies were admitted, and in 1817 and 1818 above 2,600,000 quarters of wheat were imported. In 1821 and 1822 the agriculturists endured the severest season of distress which had been experienced by that body in modern times, and the engagements which they had been induced to make under the fallacious hopes excited by the last Corn Act and the range of high prices during the war occasioned them to be swept from the land by thousands. In the week ending December 21st, 1822, the average prices of corn and grain were as follow:—

Wheat.	Barley.	Oats.	Rye.	Beans.	Peas.
s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
38 8	29 4	18 9	23 6	28 10	29 4
Being 41 4	10 8	8 3	29 6	24 2	23 8

lower than the scale which was framed for the farmer's protection. The harvest of 1820 was estimated as one-fourth above an average crop, and by some, who included the extended breadth of wheat under cultivation in consequence of the high prices of 1816-17-18, the surplus was computed at about one-third above the average,—that is, there was a surplus of between 3 and 4 million quarters of wheat, for which there was no demand. The crop of 1821 was large, but of inferior quality; that of 1822 was above an average, and the harvest was unusually early. The cause of the great fall of prices, and of its distressing effects on the farmers, was sufficiently obvious. They were under leases and rents founded upon an extraordinary conjuncture of bad seasons with a state of war, and were buoyed up by an act which promised to exclude supplies of foreign grain.

The fluctuations in price under the Corn Law of 1815 were as extraordinary as they were unexpected by the landed interests, and amounted to 199½ per cent.

The cry of agricultural distress was now heard from every part of the country, and never ceased to ring in the ears of the legislature during the years 1820-1-2. Committees of the House of Commons were appointed to inquire into the condition of agriculture in the two latter years, and numerous plans were conceived for the relief of the agricultural class. In Parliament Sir Thomas Lethbridge proposed a permanent duty on foreign wheat of 40s. per quarter, and he claimed protection for every description of produce raised from British soil. Mr. Benett's plan was a permanent duty of 24s. per quarter after the averages had again reached 80s., and a drawback of 18s. per quarter to be allowed on the exportation of wheat of marketable quality. Mr. Curwen suggested to the House that when the average price of wheat reached 80s. the ports should be opened for the admission of 400,000 quarters of foreign wheat, at a duty of 10s.; and if, six weeks after this quantity had been admitted, the average price should still continue above 80s., then to allow of the importation of an additional 400,000 quarters, at a duty of 5s. The late Mr. Ricardo moved resolutions to the effect that when the averages rose to 65s. per quarter, all the foreign wheat then in bond should be liberated at a duty of 15s.; and that afterwards, whenever the averages exceeded 70s., the trade in wheat should be free, at a permanent duty of 20s.: one year from that time the duty to be reduced to 19s., and a similar reduction to be made each year until the duty was 10s., at which it should be permanently fixed; at the same time allowing a drawback or bounty on exportation of 7s. per quarter.

The resolutions moved by Mr. Huskisson, on the 29th of April, during the agricultural panic of 1822, were to the following effect: That in February, 1819, the average price of wheat was 78s. 7d. per quarter, and the total quantity of wheat imported during the year was only 300,416 quarters. In 1820, the average price of wheat was

65s. 10d., and the foreign supplies of wheat arriving in the port of London were under 400,000 quarters; and in 1821 the average price was still lower, being 54s. 5d., and the foreign supplies in the same port were under 500,000 quarters for the year. In January, February, and March, 1822, the average price was lower still, being 47s. 9d., and the ports were closed. Mr. Huskisson's second resolution was to the effect that, "during the whole of this period of three years, the supply in all the principal markets of the United Kingdom appears uniformly to have exceeded the demand, notwithstanding the wants of an increasing population, and other circumstances which have probably produced an increased consumption." The third resolution showed—"That the excess of the supply above the demand must have arisen either from an extent of corn-tillage more than commensurate to the average consumption of the country, or from a succession of abundant harvests upon the same extent of tillage, or from the coincident effect of both these causes." To prevent the alternate evils of scarcity and redundance, Mr. Huskisson proposed that the trade should be permanently free at a duty of 15s. per quarter, when the averages were under 80s.; and when above 80s. the duty to be 5s.; and above 85s. a nominal duty of 1s. only to be imposed.

The Select Committee of the House of Commons had a still greater variety of projects offered for its consideration. One plan proposed to the Committee of 1821 was to withdraw the permission to warehouse foreign wheat or any other foreign grain in England; and the Committee felt itself under the necessity of arguing this point in their report, by showing the pernicious effect of such a regulation on the shipping interest, and on the country generally. The Committee of 1822 had under its serious consideration two plans for the alleviation of agricultural distress:—1. The application of £1,000,000 in Exchequer bills, to be employed through the agency of Government in buying up a certain quantity of British wheat to be placed in store. 2. Advances to be made to individuals on produce deposited in warehouses, to prevent them coming into the market simultaneously. The first plan was rejected by the Committee, but they considered the second was feasible, and were of opinion that "The sum of £1,000,000 so employed (in loans on stock) would probably be fully adequate to give a temporary check to the excess which is continually poured into the overstocked market." Having reaped the full advantage of high prices, it could only be as a matter of expedience rather than of equity that the agriculturists should be exempt from the effects of a return of peace and plenty. In the House of Lords, the Marquis of Londonderry, on the 29th of April, moved that £1,000,000 be advanced in Exchequer bills, when the average price of wheat was under 60s.

The framers of the Corn Law of 1815 did not take into account the effect of the years of scarcity which occurred so frequently after 1804, nor the obstruction of foreign supplies caused by the war. It was founded on the supposition that, high as were the average prices of those years, they were only such as resulted from the cost of production, with the addition of the farmer's profits and the land-

lord's rent. In the interval between 1804 and 1815, whenever a foreign supply of corn was required, the home market rose to an elevation sufficient to command a supply subject to enormous charges, amounting to from 30s. to 50s. the quarter. Freight, insurance, and other charges, which had amounted to 50s. the quarter from the Baltic, have been as low as 4s. 6d. within the last few years, but the difference between a free and obstructed intercourse was taken as little into account as the influence of a series of defective crops. Prices having sunk so much below the amount which had been assumed to be necessary to remunerate the British corn-growers, the law of 1815 was suspended by a new act passed in July, 1822. It enacted that, "as soon as foreign wheat shall have been admitted for home consumption under the provisions of the Act of 55 Geo. III., c. 26 [the Corn Law of 1815], the scale of prices at which the home consumption of foreign corn, meal, or flour is permitted by the said Act shall cease and determine." The new scale was as follows:—Wheat at or above 70s., duty 12s.; and for the first three months of the ports being open an additional duty of 5s. per quarter, being a duty of 17s. Above 70s. and under 80s., the "first low duty" of 5s. with the addition of 5s. for the first three months; above 80s. and under 85s., the "second low duty" of 1s. was alone to be charged.

In 1826, in consequence of the unfavourable harvest, a temporary act was passed, admitting a quantity of foreign grain for home consumption. Next year the Government was driven to a still more decisive step. In the spring of the year Ministers had stated that it was not their intention to liberate the corn then in bond, upon which prices immediately rose. This was followed by some disturbances in the manufacturing districts, to allay which the Government, on the 1st of May, proposed to Parliament to release the bonded corn, and, as a measure of precaution, required to be invested with powers to admit during the recess of Parliament an additional quantity, not exceeding 500,000 quarters, in case the harvest proved deficient. These powers were acted upon, and on September 1st an Order in Council was issued, admitting certain descriptions of grain for home consumption, until forty days after the next meeting of Parliament, at an almost nominal rate of duty, on the ground that, "if the importation for home consumption of oats and oatmeal, and of rye, peas, and beans, be not immediately permitted, there is great cause to fear that much distress may ensue to all classes of his Majesty's subjects." In the ensuing session of Parliament Ministers obtained an act of indemnity for this order.

In 1827, after these indications of imperfection had given strength to the opinion that some other system must be devised, Mr. Canning introduced certain resolutions in the House of Commons, the leading principle of which was to permit importation at all times by substituting a graduated scale of duties in place of absolute prohibition under 80s. A bill was brought in, founded on these resolutions, fixing a duty of 1s. on foreign wheat when the average price was 70s. per quarter; a duty of 2s. being imposed for the reduction of each shilling in the averages. In respect to colonial wheat, the duty

was fixed at 6*d.* when the averages were 65*s.* per quarter, and when under that sum at 5*s.* per quarter. The bill was not carried through the House of Lords, the Duke of Wellington having moved and carried a clause, the effect of which was to destroy the principal feature of the measure, by keeping the ports entirely shut, so long as the price of wheat was under 66*s.* the quarter. An act was, however, passed during this session to permit corn, meal, &c., warehoused on the 1st of July, 1827, to be entered for home consumption, upon payment of duties according to a fluctuating scale. About 572,000 quarters of wheat and flour were entered for consumption under this act, at a duty averaging above 20*s.* per quarter. The harvest had not been defective, and this was the very reason why the corn in bond was released notwithstanding the high duty, as there was no prospect of prices advancing. The additional supply under such circumstances caused a considerable depression in the home market.

In 1821 a new act was passed relative to the averages. Instead of "the maritime districts," 148 towns were named, for which the magistrates were to appoint inspectors to make a return of the weekly purchases.

In 1825 the trade in corn and grain to the British colonies in North America was placed on a more favourable footing. The regulations under which the timber-trade is carried on, and which favour these colonies, have to a considerable extent directed their industry into other channels than those of agriculture. During one or two seasons, recently, the United States, also, instead of having a surplus supply of wheat, have been under the necessity of importing that grain, the industry of the country having been diverted from agriculture to manufactures.

The six weeks' averages still regulated the amount of duty on importation, but they were greatly improved by being every week subject to an alteration. Each week the receiver of corn returns struck out one week's averages, admitting those last received, and thereby affecting the aggregate average, as prices rose or fell from week to week. The introduction of a fluctuating scale of duty was an important step.

It was impossible to continue any longer a system which, for three successive years, 1825-6-7, had been compelled to bend to the force of temporary circumstances; and like previous measures it was abandoned by its supporters either as inefficient or injurious.

In 1828 Mr. Charles Grant (now Lord Glenelg) introduced a series of resolutions slightly differing from those which had been moved by Mr. Canning, and they were eventually embodied in a bill which was carried through both Houses, and received the Royal assent on the 15th July. This measure, is entitled "An Act to amend the Laws relating to the Importation of Corn," and repeals 55 Geo. III., c. 26 (1815); 3 Geo. IV., c. 60 (1822); and 7 and 8 Geo. IV., c. 58 (1827). The provisions for settling the averages under this act are as follows:—In one hundred and fifty towns in England and Wales, mentioned in the act, corn dealers are required to make a declaration that they will return an accurate

account of their purchases. [In London, the sellers make the return.] Inspectors are appointed in each of these one hundred and fifty towns, who transmit returns to the Receiver in the Corn Department of the Board of Trade, whose duty it is to compute the average weekly price of each description of grain, and the aggregate average price for the previous six weeks, and to transmit a certified copy to the collectors of customs at the different outports. The return on which the average prices are based is published every Friday in 'The London Gazette.' The aggregate average for six weeks regulates the duty on importation. In 1837 the quantity of British wheat sold in these towns was 3,888,957 quarters; in 1838 there were 4,064,305 quarters returned as sold; and 3,174,680 quarters in 1839.

Wheat at 50s. pays a duty of 36s. 8d.; barley at 32s. a duty of 13s. 10d.; oats at 24s. a duty of 10s. 9d.; rye, peas, and beans, at 35s., a duty of 16s. 9d. In the case of wheat, when the price is 66s., for every shilling that the price falls the duty increases by 1s., and decreases by the same sum for every shilling that the price rises; for all other grain the duty increases by 1s. 6d. for every shilling that the price rises. Colonial wheat is admitted at a duty of 6d. when the average of the six weeks is at or above 67s.; and when below 67s. the duty is 5s. the quarter, and for other grain in proportion. Importation is free on payment of 1s. on the quarter when wheat in the home market is 73s.; barley 41s.; oats 31s.; and rye, peas, and beans 46s. the quarter.

In the following Table the scale of duties proposed by Mr. Canning, and that adopted by the legislature in 1828, are placed in juxtaposition:—

Average Prices of Wheat.	Duty according to Mr. Canning's Bill.	Duty according to Mr. Grant's Bill.	Average Prices of Wheat.	Duty according to Mr. Canning's Bill.	Duty according to Mr. Grant's Bill.
s.	s.	s. d.	s.	s.	s. d.
73 ..	.. 1 ..	.. 1 0	62 ..	.. 16 ..	.. 24 8
72 ..	.. 1 ..	.. 2 8	61 ..	.. 18 ..	.. 25 8
71 ..	.. 1 ..	.. 6 8	60 ..	.. 20 ..	.. 26 8
70 ..	.. 1 ..	.. 10 8	59 ..	.. 22 ..	.. 27 8
69 ..	.. 2 ..	.. 13 8	58 ..	.. 24 ..	.. 28 8
68 ..	.. 4 ..	.. 16 8	57 ..	.. 26 ..	.. 29 8
67 ..	.. 6 ..	.. 18 8	56 ..	.. 28 ..	.. 30 8
66 ..	.. 8 ..	.. 20 8	55 ..	.. 30 ..	.. 31 8
65 ..	.. 10 ..	.. 21 8	54 ..	.. 32 ..	.. 32 8
64 ..	.. 12 ..	.. 22 8	53 ..	.. 34 ..	.. 33 8
63 ..	.. 14 ..	.. 23 8			

This law did not succeed in maintaining steadiness of price, the extremes of fluctuation being 35s. 4d. in December, 1835, and 81s. in January, 1839, or a difference of 129 per cent. To this derangement of prices is to be attributed much of the depression which the agriculturists experienced in 1833 and 1836. In each of these years their distressed condition was noticed in the speech from the throne on the opening of Parliament, and select committees were appointed in both years to inquire into their state.

The average duty paid on the 11,318,549 quarters of foreign wheat entered for home consumption since the last Corn Laws of

1828 came into operation, to the 5th of January, 1841, was 5s. 6d. per quarter. On the 7th of May, 1841, Lord John Russell announced his intention of moving in a Committee of the whole House\* the following fixed duties on the importation of foreign corn :—

Wheat	.. .. .	8s. 0d. per Quarter.
Rye, Peas, and Beans	... 5 0	do.
Barley	... .. 4 6	do.
Oats	.. ... 3 4	do.

The following tables show the countries which are capable of furnishing us with wheat, and the quantities which they supplied us during three successive years of high prices.

AN ACCOUNT of the Quantities of Foreign and Colonial Wheat and Wheat-Flour brought into Consumption in the United Kingdom; stating the Quantities Imported from each Country during the Year from 1837 to 1839.

COUNTRIES FROM WHICH IMPORTED.	1837.	1838.	1839.
	Qrs.	Qrs.	Qrs.
Russia ... ..	3,903	141,656	256,164
Sweden and Norway ... ..	252	358	567
Denmark ... ..	7,444	147,728	202,927
Prussia ... ..	148,077	839,513	704,992
Germany :—			
Mecklenburg ... ..	36,498	147,383	104,777
Hanover ... ..	125	24,359	19,185
Oldenburg and Kniphausen ... ..	...	15,201	16,698
Hanse Towns ... ..	10,637	204,563	267,183
Holland ... ..	2,222	82,737	117,677
Belgium ... ..	153	18,284	24,516
France ... ..	202	65,012	309,897
Portugal, Madeira, and the Azores ... ..	...	...	28,800
Spain and the Canaries .. ..	2	1,279	9,010
Gibraltar ... ..	...	...	4,753
Italy ... ..	1,011	55,735	333,313
Malta ... ..	...	14,956	17,211
Ionian Islands ... ..	...	5,391	13,583
Turkey and Egypt ... ..	258	5,515	45,483
Morocco .. ..	...	...	3,358
Cape of Good Hope ... ..	...	520	3
East India Company's Territories ... ..	7,516	9,649	5,015
N. S. W. & Van Diemen's Land ... ..	117	4	...
British N. American Colonies ... ..	25,745	19,597	7,764
United States of America ... ..	112	27,047	87,528
Isles of Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, and Man (Foreign Produce) ... ..	1	21,906	30,383
All other parts ... ..	...	84	929
Total ... ..	244,275	1,848,477	2,711,725

\* A change of Ministry prevented him from doing so.

**A TABLE shewing the Consumption of Grain in the United Kingdom, and for what purpose it is consumed.**

GRAIN.	Consumed by Man.	Consumed by Animals.	Used for Seed.	Brewing and Distilling.	Used in Manufac- tures.	Total.
	Quarters.	Quarters.	Quarters.	Quarters.	Quarters.	Quarters.
Wheat ....	18,696,694	.....	3,277,143	.....	966,163	22,940,000
Oats.....	12,845,000	16,000,000	4,807,500	.....	.....	33,652,500
Barley....	2,828,571	342,858	1,810,000	7,688,571	.....	12,670,000
Rye .....	790,000	20,000	190,000	.....	300,000	1,300,000
Beans & } Peas.. }	1,000,000	2,187,480	531,270	.....	.....	3,718,750
Totals..	36,160,265	18,550,338	10,615,913	7,688,571	1,266,163	74,281,250

The value of the above quantity of Grain, at the average prices of the year 1835, was £109,874,666; of 1837, £131,421,968; of 1838, £140,736,010; and of 1839, £160,525,531.

The value of the quantity consumed by man alone, in 1835, was £58,162,235.

On Wednesday, 9th of February, 1842, a further alteration was proposed to be made in the Corn Laws, agreeably to the recommendation in Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne:—"I recommend also to your consideration, the state of the laws which affect the import of corn and of other articles, the produce of foreign countries." Sir Robert Peel proposed the following alterations in the scale of duties, which were eventually confirmed by both Houses of Parliament, as a substitute for the previous scale of 1828:—

When wheat is at 50s. and under 51s., a duty of 20s. shall be taken, but in no case shall that duty be exceeded.

When the price is 51s. and under 52s. the duty shall be 19s.

"	52	"	53	"	18
"	53	"	54	"	18
"	54	"	55	"	18
"	55	"	56	"	17
"	56	"	57	"	16
"	57	"	58	"	15
"	58	"	59	"	14
"	59	"	60	"	13
"	60	"	61	"	12
"	61	"	62	"	11
"	62	"	63	"	10
"	63	"	64	"	9
"	64	"	65	"	8
"	65	"	66	"	7
"	66	"	67	"	6
"	67	"	68	"	6
"	68	"	69	"	6
"	69	"	70	"	5
"	70	"	71	"	4
"	71	"	72	"	3
"	72	"	73	"	2
"	73	"	74	"	1

When that price is arrived at, he proposed that the duty should altogether cease. "Now it is apparent," said Sir R. Peel, "that this scale will have the effect of diminishing the temptations to

practising on the averages and producing a fall of the duty, as its operation will be gradual ; and when corn shall have arrived at 60s. or 61s., there will be no inducement to the holding back of corn for the purpose of getting higher prices, and defraud the revenue for the sake of being able to produce a sudden reduction of the duty. The protection which I propose to retain, I do not retain for the especial protection of any particular class. The only protection which can be vindicated is that which is consistent with the general welfare of all classes in the country."

This scale remained in operation until 1846, when Her Majesty recommended a continued repeal of prohibitory and relaxation of protective duties, in the following most gracious Speech on the opening of Parliament :—

## HOUSE OF LORDS.—JANUARY 22, 1846.

### THE QUEEN'S SPEECH.

*" My Lords and Gentlemen,*

" It gives me great satisfaction again to meet you in Parliament, and to have the opportunity of recurring to your assistance and advice.

" I continue to receive from my Allies, and from other Foreign Powers, the strongest assurances of their desire to cultivate the most friendly relations with this country.

" I rejoice that, in concert with the Emperor of Russia, and through the success of our joint mediation, I have been enabled to adjust the differences which had long prevailed between the Ottoman Porte and the King of Persia, and had seriously endangered the tranquillity of the East.

" For several years a desolating and sanguinary warfare has afflicted the States of the Rio de la Plata. The commerce of all nations has been interrupted, and acts of barbarity have been committed unknown to the practice of civilized people. In conjunction with the King of the French, I am endeavouring to effect the pacification of these States.

" The convention concluded with France in the course of the last year for the more effectual suppression of the slave trade, is about to be carried into immediate execution by the active co-operation of the Two Powers on the Coast of Africa.

" It is my desire that our present union, and the good understanding which so happily exists between us, may always be employed to promote the interests of humanity and to secure the peace of the world.

" I regret that the conflicting claims of Great Britain and the United States, in respect to the territory on the North Western Coast of America, although they have been made the subject of repeated negotiations, still remain unsettled.

" You may be assured that no effort consistent with national honour shall be wanting on my part to bring this question to an early and peaceful termination.

*" Gentlemen of the House of Commons,*

" The estimates for the year will be laid before you, at an early period.

" Although I am deeply sensible of the importance of enforcing economy in all branches of the expenditure, yet I have been compelled by a due regard to the exigencies of the public service, and to the state of our naval and military establishments, to propose some increase in the estimates which provide for their efficiency.

*" My Lords and Gentlemen,*

" I have observed with deep regret the very frequent instances in which the crime of deliberate assassination has been of late committed in Ireland.

" It will be your duty to consider whether any measures can be devised, calculated to give increased protection to life, and to bring to justice the perpetrators of so dreadful a crime.

" I have to lament that in consequence of the failure of the potato crop in several parts of the United Kingdom, there will be a deficient supply of an article of food which forms the chief subsistence of great numbers of my people.

" The disease by which the plant has been affected has prevailed to the greatest extent in Ireland.

" I have adopted all such precautions as it was in my power to adopt for the purpose of alleviating the sufferings which may be caused by this calamity; and I shall confidently rely on your co-operation in devising such other means for effecting the same benevolent purpose as may require the sanction of the Legislature.

" I have had great satisfaction in giving my assent to the measures which you have presented to me from time to time, calculated to extend commerce, and to stimulate domestic skill and industry, by the repeal of prohibitory and the relaxation of protective duties.

" The prosperous state of the revenue, the increased demand for labour, and the general improvement which has taken place in the internal condition of the country, are strong testimonies in favour of the course you have pursued.

" I recommend you to take into your early consideration whether the principles on which you have acted may not with advantage be yet more extensively applied, and whether it may not be in your power, after a careful review of the existing duties upon many articles, the produce or manufacture of other countries, to make such further reductions and remissions as may tend to ensure the continuance of the great benefits to which I have adverted, and by enlarging our commercial intercourse, to strengthen the bonds of amity with Foreign Powers.

" Any measures which you may adopt for effecting these great objects will, I am convinced, be accompanied by such precautions as shall prevent permanent loss to the revenue, or injurious results to any of the great interests of the country.

" I have full reliance on your just and dispassionate consideration of matters so deeply affecting the public welfare.

" It is my earnest prayer that, with the blessing of Divine Providence on your counsels, you may be enabled to promote friendly feelings between different classes of my subjects, to provide additional security for the continuance of peace, and to maintain contentment and happiness at home, by increasing the comforts and bettering the condition of the great body of my people."

At the conclusion of her Majesty's Speech the House adjourned till five o'clock.

The House met again at five o'clock, soon after which hour the attendance of Peers was rather numerous.

The LORD CHANCELLOR then read the Queen's Speech.

The EARL OF HOME rose to move the Address, in answer to her Majesty's Speech. The Noble Earl commenced by expressing his gratification that there was no topic in it which was likely to create division or difference of opinion. He congratulated the House upon the assurance of her Majesty, that she had received from foreign powers, the expression of their desire to cultivate friendly relations with their country. Every year's prolongation of peace ought to make them sensible of the advantages and blessings which it procured for this country (hear), and ought to increase confidence in the wise councils by which this state of things was maintained. He was assured the House would be gratified at seeing that the same policy was likely to be pursued in the East. Her Majesty had had the happiness to secure the co-operation of a powerful ally in endeavouring to settle the differences which existed in the Rio de la Plata. They had every reason to hope that the governments of both countries were agreed in the line of policy which ought to be pursued. There was no desire to interfere in the internal policy of the country, and it was hoped that ere long freedom of commerce would prevail in that part of the world. As every information had been afforded with respect to the negotiations, he had no desire to dwell longer on the subject. He rejoiced that there existed in another nation an ardent desire for the abolition of the slave trade, and it was most satisfactory to know that France was now for the first time co-operating with this country to procure the result. As to the right of search, he was gratified at the course which had been adopted, as he believed an effectual mode had been discovered of settling this vexed question without shocking national prejudices. He hoped, by the co-operation of the united cruisers of France and England, a stop might be put to the horrid traffic. The Noble Earl then adverted to the Oregon question, and said he was sure the House would co-operate in all measures that could be taken, consistent with the national honour, to settle any dispute with the United States. The two nations were bound together by common ties, and therefore it was to be hoped that the negotiations would terminate in a manner satisfactory to all right thinking men. He looked to the results of the last negotiation with the United States as a happy augury for the future. The treaty concluded by a distinguished member of that house, had met with the approval of both Houses. In his hands, the same satisfactory results might be anticipated as to the increase of the naval and military estimates. When they considered our widely extended empire, and our colonies scattered all over the globe, he thought they would find a sufficient explanation for the increase, without imagining that there was any probability of the interruption of peace. Upon this point, therefore, he thought the House would concur in the Address. He regretted that her Majesty had been compelled to bring under the

notice of the house the fearful assassinations which had lately taken place in Ireland. Their Lordships must have seen accounts of them in the public prints, and he felt confident they would take her Majesty's recommendation on the subject into consideration, and endeavour to provide a remedy. He also regretted the failure of the potato crop, not only in this country but in other parts of Europe. Happily the evil had not gone so far in England and Scotland. In Ireland, however, the ravages had been very great, and the accounts they continued to receive were of a very afflicting character. He thought the House would cheerfully enable her Majesty to carry out the good work which was suggested. He referred with satisfaction to the prosperous state of the revenue. It was important to consider whether the principle of the late tariff could not be further carried out. He was sure that every Noble Lord, whatever may have been his opinion when the measure was introduced, would rejoice that the revenue had not been affected by it. The Noble Earl, amid cheers, concluded by moving the Address, which, as customary, was a mere echo of the Royal Speech.

LORD DE ROS seconded the Address.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND—I should have listened with satisfaction to the speech of the Noble Lord who moved the Address, if he had not in part of his speech remarked that we should wait until we heard the statement of the Minister. I have heard, my Lords, enough in that Address to know what the Minister intends to do (hear, hear). He intends to withdraw protection (interruptions). I should like to have heard a more manly speech, and that he had mentioned the Corn Laws at once. I defy Noble Lords to say that the Speech just read does not relate to the Corn Laws (hear, hear). This is getting rid of the compact which Sir Robert Peel made in 1842 with the agriculturists, and which Mr. Gladstone, the Secretary of State, said removed difficulties, and was made for the purpose of securing to the agriculturists a permanent law. It was to secure that permanent law that the agriculturists acquiesced in that sacrifice (hear, hear). My Lords, I wish to draw your attention to what Mr. Gladstone said in 1843. He then said it would be unjust to the agriculturists, and dishonourable to the Government and to the Parliament, if they made a change in the laws which protected British industry without a great and adequate cause. Where is the cause? Decidedly not the potato disease in Ireland. No, my Lords, it was not so. The potato failure was assigned as the reason in the first instance, and promulgated in the Anti-Corn-Law League (hear, hear). I cannot for my life see why Mr. Cobden should not be made a Peer and sit on these benches (hear, hear, and laughter). I wish to ask the people of England and those persons who disagree with me in opinion on the question of the Corn Laws, whether they approve of the course taken by the Anti-Corn Law League? (hear, hear.) I say their course has been unconstitutional, and that they are the authors of this change. I hope this House will not so far abandon its duty as to permit itself to be intimidated by the Anti-Corn-Law League, or by the money that body has raised. But what is the time the Government asks us to make this sacrifice to popular

clamour? We find that Sir Robert Peel has not produced tranquillity in Ireland ; but that, on the contrary, murders and assassinations continue to take place every day (hear, hear). In this speech Sir Robert Peel comes to us, and asks us to give way, and alter those laws which every man knows, are for the benefit, not of the agriculturists alone, but of every class in the community (loud cries of "hear, hear"). I shall now call your Lordships' attention to the statement made by Sir Robert Peel in the year 1839, when he wanted office from the agriculturists. He then said "If you take away protection, the farmers will ask you to get rid of protection on every other article." Upon that occasion Sir R. Peel stated what would be the effect if protection to corn were abolished. The effect must be that all protection on other articles must be abolished (hear, hear). Are you prepared to destroy your Custom-house, and by that means destroy the revenue that now goes to support the liabilities of the nation? Are you prepared to do that? or, are you prepared to destroy the custom-houses? Are you prepared to do this? If you are, where will you get revenue sufficient to pay the public creditor? If protection to corn is to be got rid of because it is a great monopoly, are there no other monopolies in this country? (hear.) What do you think of the East India Company? What do you think of the Bank; and what do you think of the hundred others? If you consent to make a further inroad into and get rid of protection, you will have to pull down the House and rebuild it from the commencement (cheers). I will ask whether the Civil list will remain. I will ask if a single salary in this country will remain if you at once destroy the protective duties of this country. My Lords, I for one will not give your Lordships the trouble of voting upon an amendment upon this occasion; but I enter my protest, my solemn protest, against that clause in the speech, which is contrary to every principle which the present Government has ever brought forward from the speech of 1839 up to the present moment. I know nothing of what their measure is, but I have a right to speak strongly, because I happen to be one of those who are of opinion that no relaxation of the Corn Laws should be made. What have we said respecting these little measures brought before Parliament by the present Government, against which I and some of your Lordships voted, only that they were steps towards Free Trade. We, fortunately, voted against them; but Sir Robert Peel has contrived, by his eloquence and by his soothing speeches, to get a large number of Members of both Houses of Parliament to place confidence in him. My Lords, that confidence may exist still in some quarters, but I beg to say that it exists not in the large body of the middle classes of this country. What is the fair, open, honest, English manner in which the farmers of this country have come forward on a late occasion. They do not ask you to reject the measure to be proposed. No! But they come to you, and they say to the Government, "You came into office pledged to protection; you have thought fit, we know not why—we care not to impute motives, but we say you ought not to carry out these measures without appealing to the country." It must be a bad case indeed when a

Minister does not dare to face what is called a popular question on the hustings (cheers). We ask for no more. We ask for a clear stage and no favour. We ask you to appeal to the country to know whether or not these modern innovations are to be admitted, and to know whether we ought to be made dependant upon foreigners for a supply of that which we can produce ourselves. I think the House has a right to demand from her Majesty's Government the reason of their sudden changes. I know not what to call them. These reasons are only known to some dozen individuals on the opposite side. I think the country has a right to inquire why they threw up their offices, and if the protective duties were in any danger (hear, hear). My Lords, I feel that your Lordships will take this question into consideration, and will do your duty to your Sovereign and your country ; and that you will banish from your minds the Minister who proposes these measures. My Lords, I do not on this occasion intend to offer any factious opposition to the Address, but I do intend, and I do trust, your Lordships will aid me in offering every fair opposition to the proceedings of the Minister. We have heard a great deal about the disease in the potatoes, and we have suffered in England as well as in Ireland. There will be plenty of opportunities for discussing this question. But I beg to enter my solemn protest against that part of her Majesty's Speech which threatens the ruin of the agricultural interests, and this House, I think, is entitled to know the reasons why they have come to such a decision.

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON—My Lords, the Noble Duke states that he will not offer any amendment to the Address, as proposed. He has complained of the omission of all allusion to the Corn Laws in the speech from the throne. My Lords, it is not necessary in this House to follow my friend in his observations on the conduct of the Ministry (hear, hear). Nor do I think it necessary to make any allusions to the address moved by my Noble Friend, as I beg to inform your Lordships those measures will be brought before the House in a very few days (hear, hear). I entreat your Lordships to consider whether now it is right to expect me to make any explanation such as that which the Noble Duke requests (hear, hear). I hope it will not be insisted upon that any such matters will be entered upon ; but I entreat you now to adopt the address, and leave explanations to another time. This is the first instance in which such a question has been put without previous notice, and no one present can deny that the secrets which it involves should be at present stated.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND said he would now give notice that to-morrow night he would ask the question of his Noble Friend.

LORD STANLEY said,—Although he had the permission of her Majesty to make any statement in reference to the subject that was under the consideration of the House, in reference to the circumstances connected with his resignation, he thought the present time was not a proper one for going into explanations. Still, without going into details, he would state briefly the reason why he had separated from those colleagues with whom he had acted for the last four years. Although differences had existed which led to his separation from the Ministry, he still entertained for those with whom he had hitherto

co-operated, the most unfeigned regard and esteem (hear, hear). He could not state all the grounds that had led to his retirement, without also stating the measures that were then under the consideration of her Majesty's Cabinet. At the present he could not go into details, and therefore he could not vindicate his conduct, or afford all the explanations necessary why he had abandoned the position he had held. Since that time those measures may have been altered and modified, or others may have been introduced in their stead; but, in reference to them as they then stood, he would only make the statement that on one measure, and one only, there was a difference between himself and his colleagues. On all the other they were agreed. The measure to which he referred had relation to the degree and nature of protection that was to be afforded to the agricultural interest (hear, hear). The measure proposed could not meet with his approval without a sacrifice of his consistency and convictions, which he was not prepared to make. The opinions of his colleagues during the past few years had undergone considerable change, but his own had not done so; and he could not make himself responsible with them for the changes proposed.

LORD HARDWICKE could not approve of Free Trade:

LORD BROUGHAM heartily concurred. He condemned the Anti-Corn Law League, but approved of Free Trade.

LORD MALMESBURY was opposed to Free Trade.

LORD RADNOR defended the League.

The MARQUIS OF SALISBURY and the DUKE OF BEAUFORT deprecated a reduction of agricultural protection.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS.—THURSDAY.

The Speaker took the Chair at twenty minutes to two o'clock.

Exactly at a quarter past two, at which time there were about 150 Members present, the Usher of the Black Rod, Sir Augustus Clifford, appeared at the bar of the House, and summoned the Commons to attend the House of Lords, in order to hear her Majesty's Speech read.

The Speaker, preceded by the Mace Bearer, and followed by a considerable portion of the Members, immediately left the House, in obedience to her Majesty's command.

In about ten minutes the Speaker returned, and having read the Speech, the House adjourned till a quarter to four o'clock.

The House re-assembled at four o'clock, and the Speaker having taken the chair,

LORD FRANCIS EGERTON rose and said—I rise, sir, upon this occasion, for the purpose of proposing an Address to her Majesty in return to the Speech we have just heard. It is my misfortune that I cannot offer the ground for your indulgence which Hon. Members that filled a similar situation have frequently had it in their power to give. Precisely twenty years have elapsed since, under the auspices of Mr. Canning, I acted in a similar situation to that which I now occupy in the House; but I can truly say that since the lapse of those twenty years I never rose to address an assembly with less confidence in my own discretion, or reliance on any power

of mine, to deserve the indulgence or command the sympathies of this House. I hope, therefore, that on other grounds—the grounds of the importance of the juncture which calls us together, and the difficulty which even the most experienced in this House feel in rising to address it under such circumstances—I hope that the House will extend to me that consideration and indulgence which, in 1826, perhaps, I had the better claim to ask for (applause). I think it will be most for the convenience of the House that a brief review be made of the topics mentioned in her Majesty's speech, topics which I hope will meet with the unanimous concurrence of the House (hear). The observations of her Majesty respecting our relations with France are matter of congratulation to myself, and must be equally so to gentlemen on either side of the House, believing, as I do, that the peace and happiness of Europe, and more than the peace and happiness of Europe, namely the progress of civilization, and generally of good government in all parts of the world, depends more upon the continuance of amicable relations between the two countries, than any other measure which human sagacity could suggest. Rejoicing, as I do, at this guarantee for the general peace and happiness of the world, I cannot help looking with proportionate distress and anxiety to another part of her Majesty's address, which relates to our connexion with another part of the world. I cannot but look with the deepest regret to that part of the speech which refers to the probability of England being called upon to maintain her honour and her rights, as well as to afford that protection which she owes to some of her loyal subjects in one part of the world, by a resort to other than friendly measures. I most especially should regret if any differences or difficulties should render it necessary for us to terminate our friendly relations with a community which speaks the same language as ourselves, and who have so many institutions in common with our own. But I am sure that neither the present, nor any other Government, will be justified in looking to our relations in that part of the world to which I refer with any other feeling than that of a cordial desire to maintain, by every means consistent with honour and justice, the rights of both nations; but, nevertheless, we shall still be able to continue, upon cordial terms of friendship, our intercourse and amity with that great and important confederacy, the United States of America (hear). Apart from all those considerations, and utterly independent of them, I will say, that there is no portion of her Majesty's speech which I consider of more importance than that part which refers to our national defences. On this subject I will say no more than that if it were left out it would reflect little credit on those who had advised her Majesty. This question had deeply engaged the public attention, and I trust that this subject will be received by the House with the attention which it deserves. I cannot dissemble from myself that I am addressing the House on a topic of more than ordinary interest—a topic which, as it may be productive of more than ordinary advantages, is, in consequence, of more than ordinary interest—(cheers)—a topic, I will add, that is worthy of further consideration. That indication I cannot conceal from

myself; the interest and bearing of that indication coming in the train of political events, fresh in the minds of all parties in this country—coming, as I say, in the rear of these events, that indication to re-consider the whole of those laws, laws which regulated the whole importation of commodities into this country, I am sure that this subject will meet with the attention which it deserves. I concur in the propriety of this indication, and I could not indeed otherwise consistently undertake the office which I have attempted to fill (great cheers). That concurrence I willingly give; but I would have been unable to stand in my present situation if my opinions had been otherwise, and if my opinions had been such that I could not undertake this task. Still, I would hesitate before incurring the increased responsibility by pronouncing my opinion, and saying that the subject was unfit for the serious deliberation which the House is called upon to give them (cheers). I have heard many speeches in this House, but have never heard one which was more applicable to all that this House had to consider. I hold this principle also with respect to my own conduct, and consider that, as the mover of this Address, I am not at all restricted or fettered with regard to the future course which I may pursue in relation to these subjects. Upon that principle I am not called upon to go into details as to my own particular opinions, but I may take this opportunity of stating that, with regard to those subjects which so particularly engaged the attention of the country, and have been so particularly brought under the notice of the House, my opinions have undergone a considerable change (opposition cheers). I am aware that my opinions have not that influence and authority which the opinions of others, who justly enjoy a high reputation in this House, possess, and that, therefore, it might be considered improper in me to inflict on the House a long explanation of the reasons of that change; still I feel that nothing but my own insignificance could shelter me from the necessity of answering that inquiry, which public opinion has a right to institute into the causes of the alteration of opinions of public men; I say that, on this occasion, I shall not shrink from that investigation. This I will say, no defence of mine shall rest on the example of others, or be founded on the changes or modifications of opinion of those who may be looked up to as authorities. My change of opinions have been owing entirely to myself, and with regard to any modification which my opinions may have undergone, I rest the defence of them solely on my observations of the course of events, and on my own considerations of what was required, and the state and prospects of the country (“hear, hear,” from the Opposition). I have feared and hesitated hitherto to interfere with that system of restriction on importation which I have found interwoven with the whole of the relations of the country. I have hesitated for a long time before I could consent to interfere with what might be almost considered as one of the institutions of the country; but I have now arrived at the opinion that the time has at length arrived when we shall take the opportunity to seriously and deliberately reconsider the whole course of the law regulating that importation, with a view ultimately of departing from that principle which has hitherto been observed, the principle of endeavouring by

protection or prohibition to continue the restriction of the importation of articles from foreign countries with a view of increasing our home manufactures (loud cheers). When I use the term "home manufacture," let me not be misunderstood. I consider the products of the earth as intended for the food of man, and I think they should be considered as much a manufacture as any other (hear, hear). I consider the earth as a machine, and I look upon the largest land-owners in the country as nothing else than manufacturers (hear, hear). Holding these views, and considering their application to the Government, and to all the public departments of the country, I trust, and hope, and believe, that without knowing what may be the nature of the measures about to be proposed by the Government, I say I entertain a hope that when those measures shall come before the House, I shall be able to support the position I have taken, and to show that they are compatible with the broad principles I have laid down (hear, hear). I have no doubt that these measures will be embraced and comprehended in a statesmanlike manner, and be grasped vigorously, the various subjects that have come within the terms of my proposition. A fixed duty on corn was a proposition which came from the Noble Lord opposite. I have arrived at the conclusion that restrictions on foreign commodities shall no longer be upheld by the Legislature of this country (loud Opposition cheers). When the Noble Lord opposite brought forward his proposition for a fixed duty, and then gave expression to the opinions which I then maintained, namely, that if restrictions were imposed on foreign commodities, in order to secure a certain standard of remuneration to the cultivator of the soil, that would be the result of such a measure. I entertained those opinions then, and I supported them; but I have since seen reason to change those opinions (hear, hear). I am not now about to detain the House with any details. It is not my intention to enter upon a statement of statistical facts. I shall not shrink from such an investigation as would show the numerical relations of this subject, but it is not at present a part of my plan, or within the scope of the particular argument which I intend to use. But it has been my lot to reside in the neighbourhood of a dense population, whose position and circumstances I could not do otherwise than observe; and in the course of that observation I invariably found, that the dearness or cheapness of provisions had an intimate connexion with the employment and happiness of the people (loud cheers from the Opposition). It was through no merit of my own, but through an accident with which merit had nothing to do, that I was made the minister for the dispensation of considerable wealth among the population of that district. There was, consequently, a great opportunity afforded me of largely directing the energies of those around me, and as the dispenser of the wealth confided to me, and without any merit of mine, I became intimately acquainted with their state and condition, and I observed that when the rumours of a difference with the United States was spread, and the commercial relations of the country were likely to be disturbed, and the employment of the people grew deficient, that the provisions always became dearer, and the people were more than proportionately distressed. When trade

again revived in the following year the people were relieved, the price of provisions declined, and when the reaction had fully taken place it terminated invariably in an increase of the enjoyment and the happiness of all the inhabitants of the district, and, in what might be called, their permanent relief. When changes again occurred, I found that the difficulty was renewed, and the people again in distress. After that there were labourers enough to be had, but the difficulty then was to find labourers fit to do the work. I see, then, that this evil can only be rectified by Parliament; and if I were to describe the matter in the words and on the authority of one far more competent to form an opinion than I am, and who from his residence in Manchester and its neighbourhood, is far more competent to give an opinion than I am—and I find from his report, that at the end of 1841, when trade was beginning to revive, the business as it increased, also produced a beneficial effect on the state of the people, and that as it progressed, both the labourers and the manufacturers, and especially the spinners, all improved in their position and a general plenty prevailed. But the main cause of this distress, whatever opinions other people may form upon the subject, has had its origin in a deficient harvest and the failure of the potato crop; and taken in connexion with the circumstance that this catastrophe has been generally felt abroad, so that it has been almost an impossibility to obtain any supplies from thence, I ask any person who is connected with the manufacturing districts, if their thoughts did not involuntarily recur to those seasons of high price and distress which, I hope, will not again return in this country? If men's hearts did not fail them for fear of the prospect of anything like high prices recurring again? But, I may be told, and fairly told, that the abundance of which I speak, and which has, in some measure, contended against the evil of that time—that these restrictive laws which I propose to consider had no effect in continuing these high prices. Others again will contend that abundance has been the consequence of these laws. Now, whatever change of opinion I may have undergone, I have no right to question the sagacity, or still less the sincerity of those who continue to entertain this supposition. But my observation is, that if you, as a Government, undertake to control the supply of subsistence for the people—(hear, hear)—if you attempt to spread the people's table with whatever profusion you will, still you will find it impossible to satisfy the masses of the people, but rather you will send them away with appetites unsatisfied. The present abundance you may call sufficient, but no man can pronounce it to be excessive, as, after all, it is only a matter of comparison, and it is an assumption equally dangerous and hazardous to the landed proprietors and to the Protectionists (“hear, hear,” from the Opposition). I am not of opinion that we should be so dependant upon foreign countries, as some Hon. Gentlemen would imagine. I have no fear that we shall be at the mercy of foreign states. I am not afraid of any such danger, nor indeed can I see any grounds for such a fear. History tells me that no such danger will follow. History tells me that when Napoleon was in the plenitude of his power no such danger threatened, though at that period there was much more grounds for

such a result (hear, hear). In the year 1810 there was a scarcity of corn, and the quantity imported into this country was 1,600,000 quarters, and of this amount there came from France 500,000 quarters. I well know that a certain Marshal, who was raised to that dignity by Napoleon, was one who benefited largely by the smuggling of that commodity, and this would be found to be the case again, if anything like a war should arise. I wish I could rely on you, that you would, without complaint, pay some penalty for having maintained a system which has been so repugnant to public opinion; but I am consoled by feeling that there has been a period in this country in which temporary causes would create so many opportunities and so large means to absorb the temporary and local superfluity of labour, as the great public works in progress in this country represent (hear, hear). If I look again to extensions of our foreign relations, there has seldom been a period which presented a greater prospect of more extended intercourse between this and foreign countries. Never was it more necessary to preserve peace and good-will, and prevent the effects of mutual animosities between this and other countries. In consideration of these questions, the labouring classes should be foremost in the minds of the Members of the Legislature; but if I look higher, I believe there is no class in this country who will reap greater advantage from a just settlement of this much-agitated question than the manufacturers of food (cheers). Whatever may be the opinions of Honourable Members, I believe that their remuneration would be ample in removal of the dissensions which at present agitates our country (cheers). I cannot contemplate this subject without the greatest solemnity of feeling. This brings me to a part of the subject which it is difficult for me to enter upon without perhaps, in peculiar circumstances, incurring the suspicion of many Honourable Members; and that reason alone would be sufficient to induce me to refrain from originating any difference of opinion in the House on this occasion, for I hope that the House will be, at least, unanimous in replying to the speech from the Throne. I hope, I say, that I shall not introduce any topic which shall generate into an angry discussion. And, fortunately, it is not necessary for me to do so on this occasion; and I ask, what have you to expect from such proceedings? Think you that they will improve the condition of the country?—or do you suppose that bribery and chicanery will do more for us than ingenuity and experience? It was a warfare most unwise, from which nothing but a disastrous result can come, and which, should it come, as come it will, if this warfare is continued, will only rend and convulse the country from one end to the other, and give our common enemies an opportunity of stepping in and invading the land (hear). These, in my opinion are well worthy of the attention of Parliament and this House, and I trust they will receive that full, deliberate, and dispassionate investigation which their importance deserve. Such a step as this would put an end to the dangerous and useless discussions which are taking place out of doors—which, if continued, I must be allowed to say, without evincing any unbecoming or disrespectful feeling for the manufacturing body, whose good opinion I am

always desirous of maintaining, will cover the face of the nation with waters that will ultimately flow back, and leave our great national landmarks uninjured and untouched. I doubt whether this would be the case with your abodes of peaceful industry. There is this difference between your machinery and that which comes fresh from its great Creator (cheers). The trade of agitation is not a very mysterious one—it is not of difficult acquirement, and unfortunately it recommends itself to the popular taste (cheers). I can imagine no better tutor in that school than a man of liberal education, of ruined means, no principle, whose senses of real or imaginary wrongs—whose sense of fallen fortunes makes him a fitting leader for this agitation in the manufacturing districts. Such a man choosing his time is certain to become popular. Such a man choosing his time must create the greatest confusion throughout the country; and I with others dread this system of agitation. It is directly opposed to our whole social system, and if we look to the views which they inculcate, if we look to the purpose which they are intended to promote, if we look to the individuals who give their leisure to such agitation, who move air, earth, and water to compass their ends, surely we would be performing our duty by ridding the country of a law which leads to so much contention (hear, hear). Sir, it is with these views that I have endeavoured to express my concurrence in the propositions contained in her Majesty's speech, and thus it is that I have undertaken the office which I have so inadequately performed. I will not further trench on the patience of the House by referring to the other topics contained in the speech; I believe that they involve nothing which can lead to any serious discussion in this House, and I believe I will best discharge my duty by at once moving the Address. The Noble Lord concluded by moving the Address, which was, as usual, an echo to the speech.

MR. E. B. DENISON seconded the Address, reserving to himself the most entire liberty to vote for or against any measure which Ministers might propose to the House.

After the Address had been read by the Speaker,

SIR ROBT. PEEL then rose and said—Sir, I would fain hope that although the course I take is an unusual one, yet, that I am acting in accordance with the general wish of the House in now rising to give an explanation of that course which I shall take upon the present great question before the country (hear, hear). The House will consider it but natural that I should desire that not a moment should elapse before I should explain to the House the motives on which I have acted, and the principles which have governed my conduct (hear, hear). I may feel hurt at having been the object of much accusation on this subject (hear). I have been unjustly condemned without a hearing. I say nothing upon that head; and if any momentary feeling of indignation should possess me, the recollection of the great events which have taken place would be sufficient to remove any such temporary unpleasantness (hear, hear). I enter not, therefore, into any particular discussion, or particular accusations, but this I do ask—while I contend for the reserval of sentence, I ask for an opportunity, after the condemnation, of explaining the motives of my conduct (hear, hear). I ask you to

listen with patience and indulgence to those facts and those evidences which I shall this night bring before you, and which will afford the materials on which the House will ultimately pronounce its opinion. I wish to explain what were the grounds which led me, and those with whom I acted, humbly to tender to our gracious Sovereign the resignation of trust which was committed to me. I wish also to explain what were the circumstances under which the trust was reassumed, and why I am now here as the Prime Minister of this country. Sir, the immediate cause which led to the dissolution of the Government was, that a great calamity had fallen upon that article of food, on which a great portion of the people of the United Kingdom, and still larger numbers of the sister kingdom, depend mainly for their subsistence. That was the immediate and proximate cause which led to the dissolution of the Government; for it would be unfair and uncandid on my part if I attached undue importance to that subject. The particular cause appeared to require immediate decision. It was absolutely necessary at the time alluded to, that an immediate course should be taken with regard to the laws which govern the importation of corn (hear). I will not shrink now from the expression of my opinions upon those topics which have lately agitated the world, nor will I withhold from the public that the progress of reason and truth have considerably altered my views upon these topics (hear, hear). I will now freely and openly confess that my own opinions upon the subject of protection have undergone a change (loud and long-continued Opposition cheers). Alike in a public as a private situation, I claim the right to exercise the privilege of yielding to the force of argument and conviction—(hear, hear)—and at every time acting upon the results of enlarged experience (renewed Opposition cheers). It may be supposed that there is something humiliating in the making such a confession. I think no such thing (hear and cheers). I have no intuitive capacity of always determining what is right, but I have confidence in the belief that it would be false indeed, if my opinions had undergone a modification or change, to pretend to adhere to them (cheers). But then it became a question which the House and the public have a right to ask, whether the motives for changing them are sufficient and honest. Nothing could be more base in a public man than to protect himself from danger by pretending that no change had taken place in his opinions, while on the other hand it would be most inconsistent and most unjust to his Sovereign and his country, if upon seeing reason to alter his course of action he is to be precluded from making that alteration by the fear of the charge of inconsistency (hear, hear, and cheers). The question, then, for me to deal with is, whether the motives for the change are sufficient and just. There are those who contend that the removal of impediments upon the import of a great and very necessary article of commerce would be a source of great advantage, and heretofore it has been easy to combat the position of these parties by pointing out the urgent necessity for the existence of these restrictions. But, the time has arrived when it has become almost impossible to meet them in fair and open argument (renewed Opposition cheers), by showing that the advantages arising from the system of prohibition

were greater than those which might arise from their removal. The time had arrived when the system was become inconsistent with the right and just principles which ought to guide and regulate the trade of the country. It is argued that protection to domestic industry is in itself a sound principle, and agriculture being a branch of domestic industry, is entitled to a share of that protection. It is said, that in a country encumbered with an enormous debt, and liable to an enormous taxation, it is necessary that domestic industry should be protected from foreign competition—as necessary to the great body of the community. It is said to be necessary, however, that the labouring classes of the community should not be omitted in this arrangement; that wages should vary with the prices of food, that high prices should imply high wages, and that low wages should be a concomitant of low prices (cheers). If I admit that land is entitled to protection on account of its peculiar burdens, it is a question of justice rather than one of policy (hear, hear). I have always felt, that if we uphold this argument, it is still liable to removal by compensation. The three first objections to the removal of protection are objections founded on public policy, and the last is founded on public justice; but by granting compensation we remove the latter objection. I do not want to arrogate to myself that which has been used *a priori* by other persons. I want to deprive none of them of the credit to which they are justly entitled; and I confess that my own opinion has been greatly modified by the experience of the last three years (great cheering from the Opposition benches). I have had opportunities of comparing from day to day, the results which have followed during the last three years, from that principle on which you have been acting for some years past, namely, the gradual removal of protection to agriculture. I have had the opportunity of comparing the results of those years. I have watched them; and the effect of the policy has been, that during the last four or five years, I have found that the arguments of those who advocated protection are perfectly untenable. With regard to the argument, that because we have a high rate of taxation, it is impossible for us to compete with foreign industry—I have submitted it also to the test of the last three years, and so far as the experience of those years justify me, the argument is a fallacy. I have seen from the experience of the last three years ending October last, that while prices were comparatively low, wages were high, and at no time were wages for labour higher than then. But taking the three years preceding, I found that there were high prices and low wages. I cannot, then, resist the impression that, wages vary with the prices of food. Now, as to the state of trade, as I have said before, we have hitherto for some time been acting upon the principle of removing prohibitions and reducing duties; that is to say, in doing away with protection. Well, what has been the result? I will just read a statement of the results of these measures from the year 1842. Beginning with the year 1839, I find that the amount of British produce exported was over fifty-three millions; in 1840, it was fifty-one millions; in 1841, fifty-one millions; in 1842, forty-seven millions; in 1843, it rose to fifty-two millions; and in 1844, to fifty-eight millions—thus showing a

great increase since the year 1842. For in that year the amount was £47,381,000, and, in 1844, it amounted to £58,530,000 (hear, hear). Well, but it may be said that this increase has been owing to our trade with China. Now, I shall deduct all that, and then state the result. I see by the returns then, that in 1842, our trade with all other countries, except China, amounted to £46,411,000, and in the year 1844, it had increased by ten millions (hear, hear, and cheers). With regard to the last year we can give the accounts up to only the eleven months previous to December, 1845. In eleven months of the year 1843, the exports of all the principal articles of British produce, amounted to over forty-one millions; in eleven months of 1844, they amounted to £47,312,000; while in 1845, they had further increased, and amounted to £47,764,000. These results prove that they are the consequences of the removal of protection, and that such protection ought not to exist in a highly taxed country like this (hear, hear). Then, with regard to the Customs' duties, the reductions I proposed in them were to this effect. In the year 1842, I proposed to reduce the Customs' revenues by £1,438,000; and in 1844, I proposed a still further reduction in that department of £273,000; and in 1845 I proposed the enormous reduction of £2,418,000 (hear, hear). The reductions which I have made in the several imposts on the foreign commodities amount to £4,129,000, and yet, notwithstanding, that this large amount has been withdrawn, the revenue of the country has not been reduced. I ask, then, whether the expectation which I entertained at the time these reductions commenced has been real? Why, the absolute advantage which the country has enjoyed, apart from the relief given by these reductions, is upwards of £1,500,000. In taking my estimates last year, I made an allowance of £1,000,000 for the reduction of the excise duties. I made a similar allowance for the reduction of the duties on glass, and on auctions; and in regard to those duties, it should be observed that there was nothing there to make a return for the reduction of the duty. It was not like a reduction to one-half or one-quarter of the previous duty, where the increase in the consumption of the article makes up for the deficiency of the rates charged upon the article. In these cases the taxes were entirely swept away, and there was a total abolition of the tax. I felt that by vivifying other branches of industry I should be able to make up for the deficiency which I thus occasioned; and I ask the House whether I have not been fully justified in the expectation which I entertained. In making my estimate last year, I allowed for a reduction of £1,000,000 in the Excise, but I have no reason to believe that the produce from that branch of the revenue will be less this year than it was last. Yet there has been no salient point from whence to spring; but the result has been entirely owing to the natural progress of national prosperity, arising out of the great reduction of taxation. If we were to take a comparison of the estimates of the several years, we shall find that in the Customs' duties alone there has been an increase of more than £2,000,000. In 1843 there was an improvement over 1842, and in 1844 over the year preceding. In 1842 the Customs' duties produced £19,961,000, and now they are upwards of £20,000,000, although there has been a

reduction of no less than £4,129,000. Taking the reduction of duties into consideration, I believe that I shall be justified in asserting that the improvement in that department has been upwards of half a million. But I will now take a more important matter into consideration—a more important matter than either trade, commerce, or revenue, unquestionably important as all are. I will take the moral state of the country, and I am happy in stating that during the last year there has been a large reduction in the amount of crime. The number of offences has within these 12 months been reduced in the country. In 1845 the number of commitments was 24,305, that is 2,237 less than during the preceding year, namely, 1844. This was a decrease of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the year before. In 1842 the reduction was  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. In 1844 it was 3 7-10th; in 1845 it was  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., as I learn from the communications from the several quarters; and that is to me a source of great gratification. That is the fact that this reduction is chiefly observable in the chief manufacturing districts, and in some of the chief manufacturing towns, while on the other hand, the reduction of political offences has been equally great in the agricultural districts. In Wales there is perfect quietude, and not a single offence of disaffection or sedition has been committed throughout the whole of the Principality (cheers). The Attorney-General's office has been, for the last two years a sinecure—(hear, hear)—for during that period there has not been a single prosecution for any offence against the state (hear, and cheers). How different the state of things in the years 1840, 1841, and 1842. Now, let us listen to the serious state of things in these three years. There were 1,257 committed upon charges of sedition and riotous conduct. In the years 1843, 1844, 1845, there were 124 persons instead of 1,257. In the last year there was not a single one. In the year 1845 there were 422 persons sentenced to the punishment of transportation, less than in the year 1843. In the last three years there were 1,701 less sentenced to transportation, than in the three preceding years. Now, this has been during the times of comparative abundance. Is it possible, I say, then, to resist the conclusion, that low prices and comparative abundance have contributed to produce this beneficial result. Now, these are great social benefits. I do not say they are the necessary results of it, but I do say they are concurrent with a diminution of protecting duties (hear, hear, hear). Well, have these advantages been obtained by a serious detriment to that great interest whose welfare should be the constant object of our care, the agricultural? Protection to them has been diminished, and I have been the object of much attack for diminishing these duties, and deeply should I regret if these great social advantages to which I have alluded had been accompanied with any serious injury to agriculture. Now, let us see what has been the effect of reducing the duty upon the four great articles of our imports. In the year 1842, the protecting duty on flax was £10 14s. 6d. It is now comparatively nothing. Protection having been removed, what has been the result? What is now the price of Irish flax? In the year 1843 the prices of fine flax in the market of Belfast were from 65 to 70. In the year 1844 the prices were from 64 to 68, and

in January, 1846, the prices now are from 70 to 80. There is no such fear from a reduction of duties on our importations, nor indeed is there any cause for the alarm raised by some Hon. Gentlemen who have given expression to their feelings on the subject of protection. The taking off the duties from foreign cattle was predicted to be highly injurious to the agricultural interest. Now what is the fact with respect to that prediction? In 1843 there were 1,019 foreign horned cattle imported, and in 1844 there were 2,899, and in the last eleven months there were not less than 12,000; but it is not proved that this increase has been detrimental to the agriculturists of this country. In the year 1844, the contract for stores for the navy was £3 18s. 5d. per tierce, and it is now £6 8s. 8d. This latter price is the one now paid for the navy contract, and this proves beyond all doubt that, notwithstanding the free importation of cattle, the article has nearly doubled, or at least very considerably increased in cost; and this, I think, cannot be denied as an argument against those who expressed so much alarm on the repeal of this duty. It cannot be denied that the price has not more than kept pace with the import. Now there was no article which caused so much alarm as lard (loud cries of "hear, hear," and great laughter.) In 1840 there were only 95 cwt. of foreign lard imported into this country. In 1842, when the duty on its importation was repealed, 48,000 cwt. were introduced: in 1844, 76,000 cwt.; and in 1845, I believe it will be found that above 80,000 cwt. were introduced. Now what has been the price of domestic lard? In 1844 it was 48s. per cwt.; in 1845 it was 67s.; and in January of the present year, notwithstanding these enormous importations, the increase in price has been from 48s. to 62s. in 1845, and 67s. in this year (loud cries of hear, hear). Now there is only one other article which is of great importance, and which demands the most serious attention, and that is the article of wool. I was persuaded in 1844 that it was expedient that the duty on wool should be altogether repealed—that there, in fact, should be no restriction on its importation. It was more certainly in deputations than in this House that objections were urged against the free importation of that article. Certainly there were grievous anticipations lest in consequence of the abolition of the duty on that article, parties engaged in the wool trade should be injured. Well, here again there has been an enormous increase in the importation of wool. In 1842, there were 45,880,000 lbs. of foreign wool imported into this country, and in 1844 there were 57,900,000 lbs., and during the last year, I am bound to admit, that there were no less than 65,216,000 lbs. of foreign wool imported into England (hear, hear). Now what has been the cause of the reduction of the duty on wool? In 1842 the price had sunk from 11½d. to 10d., and in 1843 from 11½d. to 11d., but in December, 1845, eighteen months since the abolition of the duty, the price has risen (hear, hear, and great laughter). Now, I think, Sir, we have had experience for the last three years, sufficient to show that the removal of protection to domestic industry has been followed by an increase of our social happiness, and the interests of the country have been materially promoted (hear, hear, hear). Our morality, too, has been much improved. I could read the most conclusive proofs that the public

health has also been much improved, and that the national trade has been increased. Exports have been increased, and this is a fact in which I rejoice (hear, hear). The trade in those articles from which protection has been removed has been increased. Now, Sir, it is right that I should state that, notwithstanding the conviction which this experience has brought to my mind, that my decided impression was that, on other grounds, the Corn Laws should be reconsidered. This I was firmly resolved upon. I could not have met in this session the motion of the Hon. Gentleman for the reconsideration of the Corn Laws. I could not, I say, with these convictions—which, say what you will, I cannot forget—I could not have met that motion with a direct negative (hear, hear). Now, Sir, let me again repeat that the convictions which I have come to have been brought about by observation and experience. With this change in my opinion, I could not have undertaken the defence of the Corn Laws upon the ground that the country being heavily taxed the continuance of protection was necessary, or upon the ground that it was for the interest of the labouring classes that high prices should be continued as a guarantee for high wages; nor could I have undertaken its defence on the ground that a non-interference with the system was a guarantee for domestic peace (hear, hear). But I have more urgently wished for this opportunity to explain to those friends who have hitherto honoured me with their confidence and support, as well as to justify to them the course I have taken (hear, hear). I wish to assure them, that had I not taken the course I have done, this Parliament would have been broken up, and the defence of their interests would have been committed to the country, and another Parliament would have had the opportunity of reconsidering the question of the Corn Laws. Circumstances occurred in the last autumn which would have precluded me from meeting Parliament on the principles I had previously entertained. A great calamity has manifested itself, the limits of which were then, and are still, little known—(cheers)—and it was evident to us that we should have great difficulty in contending against that calamity. The calamity was not confined to Ireland, but it had appeared, not only in many other parts of Europe, but in England itself. This calamity made the Government aware of the fact, that the time had arrived when a change in the Corn Laws became pressingly necessary; and it was, then, our duty to our Sovereign and the country, to make use of the necessity for this change, which existed in the coming change. Now, had we pretended only that there was apprehension of a scarcity, for the purposes of effecting an alteration in the Corn Laws, nothing could have been more base and dishonourable; and you now shall have the opportunity of judging of the importance of the information we received upon this calamity, and to determine whether or no that information was not sufficient to justify the Government in warning the country against the coming danger (cries of hear, hear). So strongly, indeed, was I impressed by this information of the necessity for a change, that, in the month of November, I advised the suspension of the protective duties (opposition cheers). There are two important periods to which I must particularly allude in my explanation; namely, the periods between the 1st of November,

1845, and the 6th of November, 1845; and the 25th of November, 1845, and the 6th of December, 1845. But before I do so, I propose to read in consecutive order, the information which we received at different periods from different parts of Europe, which induce me to come to the conclusion I have done. The Right Hon. Baronet then read a series of letters from Belgium, Egypt, Poland, and other countries, detailing the ravages of the potato disease in those places. Now with respect to England, this is the limit of the information which has reached us. I should mention that the first account we had of the failure of the potato crop was received from the Isle of Wight. A gentleman writes us on the 10th of August, that he cultivates three hundred acres, and he is also a salesman in London. He was also engaged in the retail trade, and therefore fully competent to give an opinion. He had examined the crops around Sandwich and its neighbourhood, and they were almost entirely destroyed. In Kent also the crop had been most seriously injured, as appeared by a letter received from Mr. Clay. In Yorkshire the crop has been even worse, for it appears by a letter from Mr. Wood, from that place, that the injury has been most extensive. Then from Scotland I received a letter from my friend the Member for Dumfries, in which he says that the potatoes there, in many districts, were unfit for human food. This was the nature of the accounts which my Right Hon. Friend and myself had been receiving during the months of October and November, and which we spent days and nights in reading. Then, as to the accounts which came from Ireland, it would appear by them that the people of that country chiefly subsist upon that article of food. It would be difficult to estimate the number that so exist; but by the official accounts which we have received from that country from Sir W. Brown, Mr. Lucas, and Professor Kane, it appears that nearly four millions of the people of that country mainly depend upon the potato for their support. It is quite clear, then, that we have now to contend against a calamity affecting no fewer than four millions of people (hear, hear). I will not enter into any details upon this subject, I will merely content myself with reading the accounts we have received from the Lord Lieutenant confirmatory of them (hear, hear). The Lord Lieutenant stated in one of his letters that the evil will not be felt in all its intensity until the month of February or the beginning of the spring, that is the stock of last year's potatoes. This, be it remembered, is the opinion of one who was chiefly responsible for guarding against any calamity (hear, hear.) Now, after all the accusations which have been brought against me, I wish to place upon record what were the apprehensions of those who were responsible persons for the providing of measures in order to meet this calamity (hear). In a letter from the Lord Lieutenant, he stated that the disease was very prevalent, and that results of an alarming nature might be anticipated, if measures were not speedily taken to meet the evil. This letter was followed by another, dated the 21st of October, in which he says that accounts still continue to pour in of a most discouraging nature; the extent of the calamity it would be impossible to calculate—potatoes were laid up, apparently in an healthy state, which in a few days presented all the appearances of decay. On the

24th October another account reached us, in which we were told that the prices of the necessaries of life were rising, and that a spirit of discontent seemed spreading among the people, and urging upon us the necessity of adopting speedy measures in order to allay the feeling of the people, and wishing to know whether he should issue a proclamation forbidding distillation from grain.—Such were the communications they had received, and he hoped allowances would be made for the feelings of those whose duty it was to watch those calamities, and to forecast for the future. In addition to these communications, he had received communications from gentlemen unconnected with the Government, detailing the fearful consequences of the failure of the potato crop. Lord Monteagle had written to him on the subject, and the Duke of Leinster had presided over a public meeting at which the Government was called upon to interfere. Lord Clare had also written to him on the subject. The Government had sent over Professor Linley and Dr. Playfair to inquire into the subject. Dr. Linley had given to him the most alarming accounts, and these accounts had been confirmed by the report of the Commission. The conclusion they had come to was, that one-half of the potato crop had been destroyed. In any advice which he gave on this 6th November, he had only been guided by some of these letters. The Cabinet was called together on the 31st October, and meetings were held on the 4th and 6th November. On the 1st November there was no deliberation ; it appeared to him that there was the full justification for the Order in Council, or for calling Parliament together, and fully removing all restrictions on the importation of grain. He was ready to take upon himself the issue of an Order in Council, but he did not adopt that course. He wished to call Parliament together and propose the temporary removal of all restrictions. He did not consider that that would necessarily involve reconsideration of the Corn Laws, but he thought it would compel Parliament, in the interval, to reconsider those laws. His opinion was overruled ; and if he did not resign, it was on account of public and not of private reasons. He felt it was his duty to remain. The Cabinet re-assembled on November 25 ; the events which had occurred in the interim had not altered his decision. A Commission of Inquiry had, in the meantime, been appointed, and it became necessary to determine what should be the instructions issued to them. He then stated that he considered the issue of those instructions incompatible with the maintenance of the existing prohibitory laws, and that he could not consent to the issue of those instructions without reserving to himself the power of proposing an alteration in the Corn Laws. Sir Robert Peel, in conclusion, said that he had no love of power, for personal objects, and that he would hold it by no servile tenure: he had used office for the good of his country.

LORD J. RUSSELL explained his own conduct during the Ministerial interregnum. Sir R. Peel had promised his assistance to settle the question of the Corn Laws. Lord John stated the objections of Earl Grey to one of his colleagues, which defeated his attempt to form a Ministry. He hoped that the country would now receive the blessing of freedom of commerce and industry.

**MR. D'ISRAELI** adhered to the principles of protection, and did not envy Sir Robert Peel, whom he accused of egotism and treason.

**MR. MILES** would not move an amendment because the subject of the Corn Laws would be regularly discussed next week : but he expressed his utmost astonishment at the conduct of Sir R. Peel and his colleagues. He would give the strongest constitutional opposition to the Minister's plan.

**COLONEL SIBTHORP** spoke to the same effect, when the Address was carried without opposition.—Adjourned.

## HOUSE OF LORDS.—JANUARY 24.

### SATURDAY.

Their Lordships assembled this day at half-past one o'clock, for the purpose of going up with the Address to her Majesty, in answer to her Majesty's most gracious Speech.

At two o'clock, the Lord Chancellor having taken his seat, there were present the Earl of Home (the mover of the address), Viscount Hawarden, Lord Monteagle, and the Earl of Shaftesbury.

The **LORD CHANCELLOR** having adjourned the House to Monday, their Lordships went up with the Address, their carriages having been formed in procession in the usual order.

### MONDAY.

Their Lordships assembled at half-past four o'clock.

### CORN LAWS.

The **EARL OF RADNOR** presented several petitions against the Corn Laws.

The **EARL OF CLARENDON** presented a petition from the Chamber of Commerce of Manchester, praying that all duties on articles of food may be abolished.

### ANSWER TO THE ADDRESS.

The **LORD CHANCELLOR** then read from the Woolsack her Majesty's answer to the Address presented from the House of Peers, which was as follows :—" I receive with satisfaction your loyal and dutiful Address, and rely with confidence on your constant desire to co-operate with me in my endeavour to promote the happiness of my people."

On the motion of the **DUKE OF WELLINGTON** her Majesty's most gracious answer was ordered to be inserted on the journals of the House.

### CORN LAWS.

The **DUKE OF RICHMOND** rose to present to their Lordships' House twenty-eight petitions from places in Kent ; from Kelso, in Roxburgh ; from Alford, in Aberdeenshire ; one of them signed by 977 tenants and tenant-labourers in the county of Suffolk ; also from Yorkshire ; from the Isle of Thanet ; from Derbyshire ; from Somerset, and other places. In presenting these petitions, and in stating his intentions to support their prayer, he begged to state to their Lordships that the petitioners hoped and trusted that their Lordships would not consent to the contemplated alteration in the

Corn Laws, and whatever might happen elsewhere, that their Lordships would not consent to such alteration until they first appealed to the constituency to test whether they had changed their opinions on this subject. He still would wish to keep inviolate the compact entered into with the agriculturists in 1842, and he hoped that their Lordships would not permit themselves to be intimidated by the Anti-Corn Law League or their emissaries.

LORD DEVON presented similar petitions from the county of Devon.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND wished to ask the Noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington) if he had received her Majesty's permission to state to the House the reasons for her Majesty's Ministers' resignation, and for their again accepting office?

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON begged to inquire whether the Noble Duke intended to ask any further questions (laughter)?

The DUKE OF RICHMOND replied that he thought it would be more convenient to the House, if, instead of making a speech, he contented himself by asking a question, as he was sure the House would be anxious to know the grounds that led to the resignation of the Ministry, and also to know the grounds upon which a Government which declared itself one day unable to go on, undertook the government of the country in ten days afterwards.

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON—I beg to state, in answer to my Noble Friend's question, that in making the statement I am about to do, I can only answer positively for myself and for my own motives. I shall, however, state to the House what generally passed in her Majesty's Councils. In doing so, I may have to detain your Lordships for a few moments, but you may rely upon it I shall keep you for the shortest possible time. My Lords, when accounts were received from Ireland, and from different parts of Great Britain, of the state of the potato crop, in the course of the last autumn, and of the consequences likely to result from this failure in different parts of the country, my Right Honourable Friend at the head of the Government considered it his duty to call together his colleagues, in order to take into consideration the various reports that had been received. My Right Hon. Friend called his colleagues together, and having laid before them the reports I have alluded to, made to them a certain proposition for the adoption of measures which he considered necessary her Majesty's Government should adopt, in order to avoid or remedy the evils likely to occur, in his opinion, in consequence of this misfortune. One of the measures suggested to my Right Hon. Friend was, that her Majesty's Ministers should recommend, by an Order in Council, to suspend the operation of the existing Corn Laws, so as to open the ports for the admission of corn duty free. My Lords, it is not necessary that I should discuss the motives stated, or the grounds on which that recommendation was founded. I was one of those who considered that it was unnecessary to adopt that measure. I considered that a misfortune had undoubtedly occurred, which had the effect of depriving millions, I may say, of a large portion of provisions upon which they relied for food. But still there was a fair supply of food in the country. It was my opinion, arrangements should be made similar to those made in

former years, for finding employment for the people, and for finding means of rewarding them for that employment. And, my Lords, beside that, it appeared to me that the existing Corn Laws made provision for throwing open the ports, should that measure be deemed necessary (hear, hear). That law enacted, that when the price of wheat or grain should reach such an amount as that there should appear to be a deficiency or want, then the law provided that grain should be admitted at a nominal duty (hear, hear). Under these circumstances, I judged it unnecessary to suspend those laws, and upon that ground it was that I objected to that proposition. At the same time, I was most anxious that the Government should adopt measures immediately to form a commission in Ireland, and instruct that commission as to the measures to be adopted for giving employment to the people, and for procuring food for them, and for rewarding them in payment of that employment, and all those measures which, on former occasions, have been found to be beneficial and effectual. My Lords, I believe that all these measures have been adopted on former occasions. They are not new to the public servants in this country, they have been effectually adopted. My Lords, in the course of the discussion on this measure, it was intimated that a suspension of the Corn Laws might endanger a renewal of that measure, or that it might be necessary to make a very essential alteration of it. My Right Hon. Friend intimated his opinion of the necessity of making an essential alteration in the Corn Laws. I believe every one thinks now that some alteration is necessary; an alteration in certain points was necessary, and was now admitted by all (hear, hear). It was necessary to make an essential alteration in the existing laws. Many Members expressed a strong difference of opinion on the subject. As for my part, I was certainly of opinion that it was necessary to make an alteration in the Corn Laws. But, my Lords, I confess, that, in my opposition, I considered that a division in the Cabinet might endanger the safety of the Government itself, and having served in England for more than fifty years in high places, I considered it my duty to endeavour to do all in my power to reconcile the difference of opinion amongst my colleagues, to preserve a Government which enjoyed the confidence of the Sovereign, of the people, and to a great extent, the confidence of both Houses of Parliament. I considered it my duty to make every effort to reconcile the differences of opinion, as the best service I could render to my Sovereign (hear). In this attempt I did not succeed. The result was, that I advised my colleague to tender to her Majesty his resignation, and to recommend her to form a new Cabinet. My Lords, it was necessary after his again taking office, to come down to this House, and advise Parliament to make some alteration in the Corn Laws. But previous to his informing her Majesty of the difference of opinion in the Cabinet, I strongly advised my Hon. colleague to tender his resignation, after first asking her whether he would be allowed to make any alteration in those laws. The great difference, however, among my colleagues made me of opinion that it would be better for him to resign his office under the circumstances. All the Members of the Cabinet were of the same opinion. I know I was. My Hon. Friend fol-

lowed the advice of the members of the Government, and he tendered his resignation to her Majesty, and advised her to form a new Cabinet. Her Majesty asked a Noble Lord to form a new Administration, but that Noble Lord did not succeed, and the consequence was, that her Majesty asked his Hon. Friend, at the head of the Cabinet, to remain in office. My colleague wrote to me informing me of her Majesty's wishes, and then it became necessary for us to act under the circumstances; and my Hon. colleague having been of opinion that an alteration of the Corn Laws was necessary, several members of the Cabinet agreed with him in that opinion. I do not say that all were of the same opinion, but this I do know, that a great number of them were, and myself among them. I came to the resolution that, let what would happen, I should support him most cordially, and I am of the same resolution still.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS.—JANUARY 24.

### SATURDAY.

The House met to day at half-past one o'clock.

The Speaker came in his state robes; but out of a House of more than forty members the only gentlemen who wore uniforms were the mover and seconder of the Address, who wore the uniform of deputy-lieutenants; and Mr. Cradwell, one of the Secretaries of the Treasury, who wore the Windsor uniform.

As soon as the Speaker had taken the chair,

COLONEL D. DAMER appeared at the bar and informed the House that her Majesty had been graciously pleased to signify her desire to receive the Address at half-past two that day.

At two o'clock the House (on the motion of Lord Jocelyn) adjourned to Monday, and the Speaker, accompanied by a couple of dozen members, proceeded with the Address to the Palace.

### MONDAY.

The SPEAKER—I have to inform this House that the House waited upon her Majesty on Saturday last, when she was pleased to return the following gracious reply:—

“I receive with satisfaction your loyal and dutiful Address, and I rely with confidence on your support in carrying out the measures about to be proposed to promote the welfare of my people.”

### TUESDAY.

The intense interest excited by the expected statement of Sir R. Peel on the subject of the Corn Laws was this afternoon manifested in no slight degree in the vicinity of the House of Commons, as well as in the House itself. From the hour of one in the afternoon, strangers who had the good fortune to procure tickets of admission to the galleries were to be seen making their way with much haste to the scene of the all important announcement—respecting the fate of the Corn Laws,—and by half an hour after the time mentioned there were more candidates for admission to the strangers' galleries than the whole House itself could conveniently hold. Every passage leading to the interior of the House was crowded

prohibitory and reducing prot (who attended in considerable number, praising that policy, about 4y in keeping a passage clear for the any course that has been opened a little before the usual hour, tioned by the House of every seat was thronged to such an extent lic good, ought with re-one unoccupied, to the great disappointment hear). Sir, I am at some hundreds, who, having tickets, calculated cation of these pri certainty.

dations contained from the end of Parliament-street to the south end of good principle Abbey—the footways on both sides were densely lic credit, or of or the greater part, well-dressed persons, who country. Naves with inquiring of their neighbours the names of tion, members as they passed, or pointing out to others those whom they themselves happened to know. Many Hon. Members who are opposed to the Corn Laws as they now stand were cheered as they passed, and amongst those none received louder or more hearty cheers than the Duke of Wellington.

The attendance of members in the House was very numerous. We should say that there were not less than 400 members present at four. The seats below the bar, usually reserved for strangers, were filled with Peers and other distinguished visitors, and most prominent of those in the front seat were his Royal Highness Prince Albert, his Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, and the Earl of Jersey. This, we believe, was the first visit made by the Prince to the House while sitting.

Petitions, numerously signed, were presented from the inhabitants of Tring, Coventry, Walsall, Salford, and Kettering, for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws.

MR. HUME presented a petition from the townspeople of Arbroath and Dundee for the immediate repeal of the Corn Laws.

At half-past four o'clock his Royal Highness Prince Albert, accompanied by the Earl of Jersey, entered the House, and took his seat on the cross benches immediately behind the Sergeant-at-Arms.

On the motion being put that the Speaker do leave the chair,

MR. MILES rose, and said he wished to ask the Right Honourable Baronet at the head of the Government a question before they resolved themselves into a Committee of the whole House, and he was sure from the well-known courtesy of the Right Hon. Baronet, that he would answer his question if it was in his power to do so. He understood that the Hon. Baronet was now about to make his financial statement, and he wished to know whether it was his intention to take any vote that evening upon the question? And if it was, he should be glad to know if the Right Hon. Baronet was prepared to press for the decision of the House upon his financial proposition before the country had had time to express its opinion upon it. He hoped that previous to their coming to any decision upon the question, time would be allowed for duly and properly considering it in all its branches; but, at all events, whether the Right Honourable Baronet answered the question in the affirmative or the negative, he would afford ample time to the counties to state what their opinions might be upon it (hear).

SIR R. PEEL—The statement which I shall make to-night will be

more a commercial than a financial statement, and, therefore, I do not intend to take any money vote in the Committee of the whole House (hear). It is not my intention to ask the House to express an opinion to-night upon any part of the statement, because it is my earnest wish that the proposal I shall make should be maturely and deliberately considered by the House before they come to any decision upon it (cheers). For this there are sufficient reasons. I believe that the task which is imposed upon me is such that the House will be content to take a candid and indulgent consideration of the position which I hold, and whatever may be the opinion entertained, I have no doubt in my own mind as to the result at which we shall arrive; but I trust in the mean time that the matter will be discussed in a candid and impartial spirit.

The SPEAKER—The subject for consideration is the alteration to be made in the Corn Laws, and the alterations which have lately taken place. The question now is that I leave the chair.

The House then resolved itself into a general Committee, and Mr. GREENE took the chair.

SIR R. PEEL—Whatever may be the opinion entertained of the course intended to be pursued by her Majesty's Government, or of the proposal which, on their behalf, I have to submit, no one will entertain a doubt that their objects are of the highest order, and that the purpose of the Minister is one perfectly coincident with their views of the advantage to be derived from a full consideration of the interests of those several portions of the community; and I think that none will disagree with me in the certainty, that the public interests can be better served by candid dealing than by mere party endeavour. It may suffice to say that in this discussion I calculate on the impartial consideration of the House. I am aware that in so important a discussion as that which may possibly take place, her Majesty's Government, whatever may be the result, are determined to fulfil the duties of their several offices, and, whatever may be the character of the Ministry, on this they are agreed—that the relief of the duties on commerce, whatever that may be, and the relaxation of the duties on commerce which I had the honour last session to propose, should be continued this year, and enlarged for the relief of the people. I am about to proceed on the assumption that protective duties ought to be abolished, and are in principle open to objection, and that the policy of maintaining them may be defended, but that there must be special considerations, either of public policy or of justice, to vindicate their maintenance. I am about to act upon this assumption. During the period of the last three years there has been in this country an increased production of revenue, notwithstanding that there has been a remission of many heavy taxes there has been an increased demand for labour—that there has been an increase of commerce, and that there has been increased comfort, happiness, and contentment in this country (hear, hear, hear, and loud cheers). I do not say that these blessings have necessarily been caused by any particular policy you have adopted, but this I say, the enjoyment of them has been confirmed by your measures—that these blessings have accompanied the measures sanctioned by the House of Commons—the policy of repealing

prohibitory and reducing protective duties. I am not now, then, by praising that policy, about to call upon the House to recede from any course that has been pursued—a course which has been sanctioned by the House of Commons, and which, as productive of public good, ought with regard to consistency to be persevered in (hear, hear). Sir, I am at the same time, in advising the continued application of these principles, not about to discard the other recommendations contained in her Majesty's speech, namely, that the adoption of good principles should not be the means of endangering the public credit, or of causing any permanent loss in the revenue of the country. Neither, Sir, have I lost sight of the other recommendation—namely, that in proposing sound principles, we should act with sober forbearance, and not prejudice any great institution. I hope this will not be rendered necessary, either on account of any measure I may have to propose, or you may have to adopt; above all, I hope that the confidently expressed opinion of her Majesty, that this great subject will receive the deliberate and dispassionate consideration of the House of Commons, may be realized. I have already said, in answer to a question put by an Honourable Gentleman, that I do not contemplate asking the House of Commons to pronounce to-night any opinion upon the entire, or any component part of the measures to be submitted for your consideration; but that, on the contrary, it is the wish of the Government the questions shall be dealt with by you in a calm and dispassionate manner (hear, hear). It may be possible, that as I am about to propose so many reductions, some Hon. Gentleman may denounce me as rash and improvident, and declare that my measures ought on that account to be rejected by this House. If such should be the prevailing impression among those who are favourable to protection, nothing can be more easy than that on the day when they are called upon to consider those great and momentous questions, I should be permitted to ask the House to put upon record a counter principle (hear, hear). It may be, on the other hand, that the House and this country, considering the great difficulties of this question—considering the variety of opinions—considering the nature of the contest which has long existed, and which I believe will long continue unless there be a satisfactory and early adjustment of this question (hear, hear). It may be that even those who may dissent from particular parts of the great scheme which I am about to propose to the consideration of the House may be disposed to accept this proposal as an entire settlement of the question, and that the voice of the country may pronounce upon it as such (hear, hear). An inequitable or unwise adjustment, it may be considered, would be preferable to the perpetual conflict in which we are involved; and if that be the position which the general opinion of the reasonable and intelligent of all classes shall take, in that case I shall have confidence of ultimate success. On the other hand, as I said before, if I touch so many interests by the application of that great principle, that protective duties are not in themselves right, and ought to be relinquished; in that case another fate will await my proposal, and the sooner it is disposed of the better will it be for the public good. Sir, that principle to which I have referred, namely, the relax-

tion of the protective duties, I am not about to apply to any one particular class of trade. I am not about to select that great interest connected with the agriculture of this country and call upon them to relinquish protection, and at the same time forbear to call upon other interests to relinquish their privileges. I shall make no isolated proposal. The principle for which I shall contend is a just and wise one—I shall ask all classes to give up their protective privileges, and to make the sacrifice which that application shall cause (hear, hear). Sir, the House is aware that during the last two years, what is called “the Customs’ Duties Act” was amended; at that time the Customs’ duties were submitted to the review and consideration of this House. In 1842, it was my duty, as the head of the Government, to propose a great change in the then Customs’ duties. The general principle of the plan under which I then acted was to remit the duties upon articles and raw materials constituting the element of manufacturing industry. The plan then submitted to the House was to subject in general manufactured articles of labour in other countries to duties not exceeding £20 per cent. The house adopted the principle upon which we had acted in 1842. In that year we selected a number of the raw materials for the remission of the duty. In 1844 we reduced altogether the duty upon wool. In the year 1845 we reduced altogether the duty upon cotton. There is hardly a raw material for import into this country upon which the duty has not been either entirely abolished, or considerably diminished. The manufacturers of the country therefore now have an advantage which they did not possess hitherto. They have free access to the raw material which constitutes the fabric of their manufacture, and I consider that I am therefore entitled to call upon the manufacturers to relinquish that amount of protection which they now have (hear, hear). The manufacturer has now an advantage which he has not had before. There might have been great doubt as to whether you might have continued to derive the same amount of revenue from the importation of cotton wool which existed in 1844. But the House disregarded the amount of £600,000 or £700,000 of revenue derived from such a source. They wished to establish the stability of the manufacture of articles from sheep and cotton wool, and to place it upon a sure and certain foundation. They were willing, therefore, and consented to forego this amount, so easily levied, and which caused so little complaint from the great body of the people. In order to remove this duty, not only upon sheep’s wool, but also upon cotton-wool, this House subjected itself to the imposition of the income-tax, in consideration of the removal of the duties upon these raw materials. I propose, Sir, in reviewing those articles upon which there at present exist duties, I propose to take first those articles of raw material which still remain subject to a duty; and in dealing with these articles I beg to call upon the manufacturers to relinquish that amount of duty which they now possess. Sir, I hardly know any articles of the nature of raw materials subject to duty except tallow and timber (laughter). Tallow is an article of very great importance to the community and the people at large, it being used in the manufacture of soap, candles, and also for the purpose of dressing

leather. I propose to make a reduction in this article from the amount of duty now levied. With respect to the duty on tallow from the United States, the duty on which was 3s. 2d, I will, purely for the purpose of encouraging that produce, which was now chiefly procured from Russia, propose a relaxation in that duty, with the hope that it would ultimately procure a reciprocal reduction on their part with respect to the produce of this country. I will, therefore, for that purpose, propose to reduce the duty on tallow, which now is 3s. 2d. to 1s. 8d. I am taking the articles of raw material first, and shall now come to timber, the produce of our own colonies; timber is the only article which I cannot definitely give an explanation of, as the reduction which I am disposed to make must depend on the manner in which I am met by other States on that article. The course her Majesty's government intends to pursue will be a gradual reduction to a certain sum of the existing duties on timber (hear, hear). The reduction will be apportioned, if possible, so as to cause no derangement of the duties on timber from the Baltic. But at a very early period it was the intention of her Majesty's Government to make known their arrangements with respect to timber, on which it was difficult to get that information which was necessary. And now, after having made all these reductions, I hardly know a single raw material which has a protective duty imposed upon it. After having taken this course—after having afforded the manufacturer every facility—after having given him a free command of the raw material—I will call on the manufacturers of the three great articles which enter into the consumption of the great body of the people, I will ask them to give that proof, which I am sure they will (hear, hear, hear),—of the sincerity of their convictions as to the impolicy of protection, by consenting to relinquish the protection on corn (hear, hear, and loud cheering from the Opposition benches). The three branches of manufacture of which I speak are those which give clothes to the great body of the people. I mean those of linen, woollen, and cotton. I will ask them to set the example to others by relinquishing at once, cheerfully, the protection on corn (hear, hear). My Honourable Friend the Member for Dorsetshire (Lord Ashley), and I call him my Honourable Friend, for it shall not be my fault if these unfortunate political differences interfere with private friendship and regard—I will call him at once my Honourable Friend—expressed a hope, being jealous of an expression which occurred in her Majesty's Speech, that the small interests of the country should not be visited injuriously. I will tell him that those interests will meet with the especial care of the Government. I do not purpose in this review of the tariff to subject myself to the imputation of concealing my intention. I declare it now that I mean to affect great interests, and protect, as much as possible, these small interests alluded to. My Honourable Friend will, therefore, be gratified in his expectation (hear, hear). I shall propose, with regard to cotton manufactured goods, including the great mass of heavy goods, such as calicos, prints, &c., to make an alteration. Manufactured goods were now subject to a duty of 10 per cent. These I propose to make duty free; and those articles which are charged 20 per cent., I propose to reduce to 10 per cent. (cries of

“hear, hear,” and cheers). The articles which constitute in a great measure the clothing materials of the great bulk of the people I propose to make duty free (loud cheers and interruption). Allow me to state the whole of my scheme, before you draw inferences as to any part of it. I am the more anxious to call upon the manufacturers to relinquish these duties, because, according to high authority, it was not the agriculturists but the manufacturers who first called upon the Legislature for the imposition of protective duties (cheers). I doubt not, therefore, but they will now come forward and set the first example in giving them up (cheers). Adam Smith, a great authority, says—“That farmers and gentlemen connected with agriculture were, of all persons in the community, the least subject to the wretched spirit of monopoly” (great laughter and cheers). He also said, “that it was not the agriculturists, but the manufacturers, who had first appealed for the protection of the restrictive system (loud cheers). They are always ready to call out against the restrictions on all other articles but that which pressed heaviest upon their countrymen. They may be said to be the original inventors of all monopoly” (laughter). Honourable Gentlemen may have cause for laughter by the reading of this extract, but it is perfectly true. I propose that the duties on the coarser articles of manufacture shall be materially reduced, and which will have a material effect on the manufacturing interest of this country, but not to the great injury of the manufacturing interests. I propose that the made-up woollen goods shall also be reduced in duty to the same amount, namely, a reduction of from 20 per cent. to 10 per cent. (hear, hear). I stated the other night that flax was a very important and a staple article of our manufacture, and also that although there was no duty on this article, that its great import was not injurious to our growers of that article, and I believe that it has not been contradicted. The duty on linen goods varies according to their quality: but the reduction of the duties on those articles cannot be so injurious to our manufacturing interests as may at first be imagined, for I am of opinion that the improvements made by our own workmen will always keep up the market in their favour. I now come to another very important article of our imports. I mean the silk trade (hear). Now don’t let us suppose that the existing duty on silks operates as a protection to the domestic manufacture of that article (hear). You have a duty which you call 30 per cent., but which with respect to many articles is a great deal higher; and as a false reliance is placed on this, as to its being a protection to domestic manufacture, I think it proper to state that there are houses in Paris, and on the continent, which will guarantee to deliver goods in London at half the duty at present levied (hear, hear). It is, therefore, a mistake to imagine that the duty affords, the protection which is stated. In the first place it appears that it is an encouragement to smuggling, as the article may be frequently purchased from those engaged in this traffic for a small sum, compared with that which it will realize in the legitimate course of business. I conceive, therefore, that by a new arrangement with respect to the silk duties—in fact that a reduction of these duties, which are not interfering with any domestic manufactures, will at

the same time, diminish the profit of the smuggler, and encourage a lawful and wholesome trade (hear, hear). Now, the general impression is, that there is a duty of 30 per cent. on silk manufacture. I hold in my hand an account of the duties upon the silk manufacture as at present levied ; and, although, in respect to some it may not exceed 30 per cent., and in others less than 10 per cent., yet there are many articles comprised under this definition with respect to which the duty is much higher than this. In the case of crape the duty is not less than 40 or 50 per cent. ; on fancy silk the duty is not less than 30 to 31 per cent. ; on silk bonnets not less than 145 per cent. ; in the case of turbans it is at least as much. Does any man, therefore, believe foreign turbans, bonnets, and hats, pay a duty of £145 per cent. It is no such thing. The article is in common use here, but its value is reduced by the common smuggler. Now, I propose a new arrangement with respect to silk, but I must not now enter too much into details, as the whole of my statement will be subject to correction after it has appeared to-morrow morning. I now wish to introduce a new principle, based on a general scale which shall enumerate each species of silk, and the amount per pound at which it will be admitted with an option to the custom-house officer to levy a duty on every quantity of silk of the value of £100, a duty not exceeding 15 per cent. The general principle, therefore, shall be that a reduction of 15 per cent. on this article, which, heretofore, had been, on the average, 30 per cent. on such articles, but in reality it was greater on some articles and less on others. There is another article of manufacture which I think may be fairly permitted to enter into competition with the same article in this country, for I do think it would have the effect of stimulating that trade to greater industry and exertion—I speak of the article of paper (hear, hear), that is paper-hangings. At present there is a duty upon all foreign paper-hangings imported into this country of one shilling per square yard ; and this applies to all descriptions of paper-hangings. Now, I believe it is possible for some descriptions of this article to be manufactured and sold at the rate of one farthing the square yard. Of course the very fine descriptions, such as those with gold borderings, may still be liable to the duty of one shilling ; but I do think that a shilling per square yard duty upon paper which can be made for one farthing per yard is exorbitant, and therefore I propose to reduce that duty on certain descriptions from one shilling to twopence the square yard upon paper hangings coming from abroad (hear, hear). I now approach those descriptions of manufactures which are connected with metals (hear, hear, and cheers.) It is impossible that I can go through them without entering into minute details, and therefore I do hope that the House will hear me with patience (hear, hear). We have already reduced the duty upon foreign ores, and I do think that if there be any articles of manufacture in this country which, more than another, can bear competition, it is that description connected with metals. The manufactures of metals (I do not mean to particularize them) are now chargeable with a duty of 15 per cent. I propose with regard to them, and I include all descriptions, which I do not now mention ; but I say, as a general rule, that this duty shall not exceed 10 per cent.—That is

quence of the reduction in the duty, at not less than 50,000 tons a year. Up to the last return, the increase in the consumption had already reached 38,000 tons, and whether or no during the remaining period my estimate has been borne out, I cannot undertake to say, as it would be exceedingly difficult to calculate, unless I had the total amount of increase up to the present time. Still there cannot be a doubt that there will be a great increase in the consumption of sugar. The amount of free labour sugar brought into competition with British Colonial sugar has not equalled my expectations. I calculated that the amount of free labour sugar would be 25,000 tons. The amount which has been actually brought into home consumption has fallen very short of that, but I believe that this may be accounted for by the failure of the crop in Cuba, and by the increased consumption in other parts of Europe. This, of course, caused a deficient supply to this country from those parts of the world in which free labour is employed. Although this will in a great measure account for the reduced supply, yet I am bound to say that I think the British Colonial sugar can bear increased competition with foreign sugar, the produce of free labour. I am not prepared to make any relaxation in our principles with respect to the admission of sugar the produce of countries carrying on the slave trade. We shall adhere to those principles, but with respect to sugar, the produce of free labour, while the consumption of that sugar is so limited, her Majesty's Government have not thought it right to exempt that sugar from the operation of the general principles which I have stated. We propose, therefore—assuming that the population is to use foreign sugar the produce of free labour—we propose to deduct 3*s.* 6*d.* from the amount of the present differential duty. In the case of muscovado sugar the amount of differential duty is, I think, 9*s.* 4*d.*, and in the case of clayed sugar, the amount of the differential duty is 11*s.* 8*d.* We propose to deduct from the amount of differential duty on each description 3*s.* 6*d.*, leaving the amount of differential duty in favour of British Colonial sugar, competing with sugar the produce of free labour, 5*s.* 10*d.*; and in the case of the finer sugars, clayed, the differential duty will be reduced from 11*s.* 8*d.* to 8*s.* Now I come to those import duties which have a decided influence on agriculture. I would not only say those which have an immediate effect, but those which are connected with agriculture (great cheering). I think that I am perfectly justified in alluding to their interests, and in considering those who are intimately affected by it, for there are great properties which are concerned in the matter, and of which the best judges are desirous of obtaining a definite result. There are duties, which, not being protective, I shall not touch. I would allude here to the article of tobacco. But in making these remarks, I do hope that the House will not leave out of their calculation the consideration of revenue (cheers). We must not forget that we ought not to depress the revenue of the country, for upon that depends all our means of doing any good to the public, and the opportunity of reducing the impositions upon those commodities which are absolutely needed by the people. I therefore propose, that all those duties should be reduced as far as possible, but yet it should be recollected that a revenue

must be raised, not for the purpose of hostile aggression, but for the sake of national defence. I would, therefore, propose that a revenue should be raised for the object of national defence. You must, therefore keep that consideration in mind, and believe that while I am proposing this reduction of the import duties, that I am not at all unmindful of the necessities which exist in consequence of the obligations into which the agriculturist has entered ; for I recollect that there are certain duties which cannot be obviated. It is our business to provide for them. I am aware that some of the duties imposed upon agricultural produce are extremely high ; and as my object is to relieve that interest from as many of its burdens as I can, I would attempt a reduction similar to that which I proposed on manufactures during last session. Now, the duty on grass seeds can affect nobody, while its remission may be of service to the country. I propose to reduce that duty. In the year 1842, it produced £144,000. By the remission of the duty the country will be largely served, whilst no injury will affect the revenue. I believe that the producers of clover in this country look upon the duty levied upon the importation of clover seed rather as a heavy tax upon themselves than as a protection (hear, hear). With respect to the removal of the duties imposed on agricultural seeds generally, then, it will not be so much a removal of protection, as conferring a benefit on agriculture ; and I intend so to reduce the duty on seeds as to make it merely nominal (hear, hear). It was reduced one-half in 1842, and it subsequently underwent a still further reduction, and I now intend to simplify the duty imposed on seeds in the same way that I have proposed to simplify the duty on articles of manufacture. The uniform duty on manufactures I have fixed at 10 per cent., and I propose that the duties on seeds shall not exceed 5s. per cwt. ; hitherto in some cases, such for instance as onion seed, the duty has not been less than 12s. per cwt. ; but now with respect to all seeds I propose that the maximum duty shall be 5s. per cwt. I have already spoken of some other articles, which are of the utmost importance to agriculture, namely, those used for the fattening of cattle. I believe it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of promoting the fattening of cattle, because it tends to advance an improved system of agriculture (hear, hear). It has tended to restore the fertility of many soils more, I believe, than any of the artificial means which are sometimes resorted to, and, I am sure the House will see that any measure which will promote the fattening of cattle must prove highly beneficial to the country (hear, hear). I believe there is no manure so valuable as that which is directly derivable from the soil itself, and nothing, I am convinced of it, will lead more to the improvement of agriculture than by encouraging the fattening of cattle on the land itself, and thus promoting the acquisition of manure for agricultural purposes (hear, hear). I propose therefore, that the article of grains, which, I believe, would be much employed for the fattening of cattle, shall be hereafter imported duty free. There is another article which might be applied with great advantage to the fattening of cattle—viz., Indian corn—which I also propose shall be introduced duty free (cheers). By removing the duty upon grains I do not consider that I am depriving agriculture of protection, but rather conferring a benefit upon it (hear, hear). Maize

is an article that is much used abroad for human food, and I believe its utility for this purpose has been much disregarded in Europe, and in no place more so than in this country. It is used, if I am not mistaken, for human food in Italy, America, and many parts of France, and looking at its utility for the fattening of cattle, I think, with respect to this article also, I am conferring a benefit on, rather than impeding the progress of agriculture in this country, by removing the restrictions imposed upon its importation (cheers). I also propose that an article called buck-wheat should be subject to the same rule; that is, that it be admitted at a mere nominal duty. I propose that the meal or flour should be admitted on an equal footing with Indian corn. If any gentleman will ascertain the very large sums paid annually by the best farmers throughout Great Britain in the purchase of linseed cake and rape, he will agree with me that an increased facility for the admission of articles that can be used for the fattening of cattle will be of no disservice (hear, hear). The demand for the articles I have last named is very considerable, the consumption by some farmers being very great, and if I am informed correctly, the chief object upon some farms is to provide an adequate quantity of manure for the purpose of improving the soil. The prices of linseed and rape cake has been gradually rising of late years. In the year 1843, linseed cake was from £9 to £10; in 1844, from £11 to £12; and in 1846, from £12 to £15. The price of rape cake was in 1843, £4 5s.; in 1844, £4 10s. to £5 10s.; and in January, 1846, the price rose to £6. I hold now, in my hand, a letter from a merchant, a resident of the United States, who recommends that there should be a free importation of all the articles used to fatten cattle. He recommended especially for the purpose an article termed rice-meal. Now, surely a cheap supply of that article is very desirable. It is the refuse of rice ground up, and is much less costly than oil-cake or the other descriptions of artificial food now used by farmers, and, therefore, is admirably fitted for the feeding of cattle. The admission of such an article would, in my opinion, be so far from disservice, a positive advantage (hear, hear). I come now, Sir, to the consideration of those articles immediately connected with the food of the people (hear, hear, and cheers from all parts of the House). Sir, on introducing this question I anticipate the greatest difference of opinion (hear, hear). I have those to meet who want no delay and no qualification: and I have also to meet those who insist upon it that there shall be no relaxation of, or reduction in, the present amount of protection (hear, hear). Sir, my object will be, if possible, to make some adjustment of this important question. I know that nobody will approve of my plan—(great laughter)—but our desire is, without favour or undue partiality towards any class, to suggest that which we believe to be just, and calculated to terminate that conflict, the continuance of which might be fatal to the country (hear, hear). I do trust that by the plan which I have proposed, the jealousy and dissension between the different classes of her Majesty's subjects may be removed without any injury to any particular class, and thus, it is to be hoped, that we shall promote the general interest of the country. I consider that it is for the public advantage that this subject should meet with a final settlement (cheers).

I am not about to propose an immediate repeal of the duties which are imposed upon corn. What I have to propose is an earnest of the principle upon which I shall act. I am induced to propose an immediate reduction upon many articles of primary importance, and which constitute a principal portion of the food of the people ; but I must state this, in respect to the plan which I shall propose, that there shall be an immediate reduction of the duties on those articles on which I do not propose an immediate and total repeal. I propose that the duties—speaking of the articles of consumption—-I propose to take that extensive review of the articles included in the tariff relating to the articles constituting the food of the country. I propose to make a reduction—an immediate reduction—upon the duties of the whole of them (hear, hear, hear). I propose, on the part of her Majesty's Government, that the duties should be immediately reduced upon butter from £1 to 10s. per cwt. ; upon cheese from 10s. per cwt. to 5s. per cwt. ; and upon hops from £4 10s. to £2 5s. I will now mention the articles of agricultural produce upon which I propose an immediate repeal. With respect then to those articles of general consumption, upon which the reduction will be total and immediate, I propose to abolish entirely the duties upon bacon, also upon fresh beef and salted beef, upon salt pork, and fresh pork, and all other articles of animal food enumerated in the last tariff. These I propose to be admitted duty free. With reference to potatoes and other articles enumerated under the head of vegetables, and which form articles of general consumption, I propose that the whole of the duties shall be totally and immediately repealed. Everything included under the heads of vegetable and animal food, will be admitted duty free. In thus acting, observe that I have dealt equally with the agricultural and the manufacturing interests. To the agricultural interest I give increased facilities, by removing the duties now levied on seeds and other articles. The reduction in bacon, butter, and other articles of food, will also benefit the manufacturers. I believe that the growing and increasing skill of the country, and the stimulus that will be afforded them by competition, will give them an increased advantage over foreign countries. Then, having removed the duties from all articles of food, I propose also to remove at once all the duties upon the importation of cattle (hear, hear, and cheers.) In short, I propose that all cattle imported into this country shall be admitted duty free (hear, hear). There is no necessity for mentioning the amount of duties now levied upon cattle, still less occasion have I to mention the several amounts of duties upon other animals mentioned in the late tariff. I will now propose the reduction of all duty on cattle, both lean and fat. The increased facility for getting the lean cattle, will, I hope, be some compensation to the agriculturists for doing away with the duty on all animals (laughter). Those who may be disposed to find fault with this measure, will, I hope, bear in mind, that I have proposed the removal of protective duties from some of the great articles of manufacture. I call on the manufacturers to show the first example. I now come to the proposal which I intend to make with respect to corn (hear, hear, and cheers). We propose at once to remove the duties upon all animals enumerated in the tariff ; and I propose, Sir, as a proof of an adherence to

these principles, that the duties upon animal and vegetable food, and also upon cattle and other animals, shall at once cease. I will now state the proposal which I mean to make on the subject of the Corn Laws. I have already stated that I exempted some articles now included in the Corn Laws, from duty altogether—maize and buck-wheat. I propose, from the passing of this act, that they shall be admitted duty free. On the one hand, I do not propose an immediate repeal of the Corn Laws ; but in the hope of making a final adjustment—of preventing undue apprehension—of giving time for the adjustment of agriculture to the new state of circumstances—although I propose a temporary continuance of protection, yet I do propose that the bill shall include a distinct enactment, that after the lapse of a certain time, foreign grain shall be imported into this country duty free (tremendous applause from the Opposition benches). I am deeply convinced that any intermediate proposition would be of no avail (hear, hear, hear). It would have been out of my power, I have explained to the House on a former occasion, to suggest any modification of the existing Corn Law with a guarantee that it should continue—I say it would have been out of my power (loud cries of “hear, hear”). The decision is either between the maintenance, in fact, of the existing amount of protection in every particular, or laying the foundation for the ultimate and certain settlement of the question (hear, hear, hear). I propose, therefore, a considerable reduction in the existing amount, and I propose that the continuance of that duty, so reduced, shall be limited to a period of three years (loud cheers from the Opposition) ; that the act shall contain a provision that at that period of the year when I believe there would be least inconvenience in the termination of protection, namely, on the 1st of February, 1849, oats, barley, and wheat shall be subject only to that nominal rate of duty which I proposed, just now, to apply immediately to maize and buck-wheat (loud Opposition cheers). The question is what shall be the intermediate state of the law during the continuance of such protection. My opinion, I am bound to say it, as to the policy of providing immediately for a great reduction of the duty on corn remains unchanged. I cannot admit that I took an erroneous estimate—I regret to say it—I wish I could, but I cannot admit that I took an erroneous estimate of the pressure which, before the arrival of the next harvest, will be felt in many parts of the country (hear, hear). I think—not only looking to the prospects of the next spring, but looking to the consequences of the deficiency of food in Ireland, I think it is of the greatest importance to take precautions, as far as legislation can, against anticipated suffering from that deficiency (hear, hear). It is possible that the results of such deficiency will be more extensive than we calculate upon. I wish it were possible to take advantage of this calamity, in one sense, and extract benefit from it, by introducing among the people of Ireland the taste for the reception of a higher description of food (hear, hear). Ireland is the chance to which you will be constantly exposed for a recurrence of these visitations, by which deficiency will arise in the ordinary food of millions of our fellow-creatures (hear, hear, hear). We have yet to consider what substitute there shall be for all that portion of the sound potato

which must for a time be devoted to seed (hear, hear). You cannot change the tastes and habits of the people. You may think the potato an insufficient article of subsistence, but you cannot for two or three years to come dispense with their reliance upon the potato. I am not now about to propose that which I proposed on the 1st of November—an immediate suspension of the Corn Laws. Any proposal to effect that by an order in council during the sitting of Parliament is out of the question. But this I think important, namely, to make such a reduction in the present amount of duty as will realise part of the advantage which might be derived from an immediate suspension. I wish to have but one law in operation for the limited period to which I refer, and I think by that law to take those precautions, in part at least, which by an immediate suspension I could not take. I propose, therefore, that for the present there shall be an immediate and great reduction in the amount of duty, and that that amount so reduced shall endure only for a limited period, there being a guarantee then by express enactment in the bill, that on the arrival of that period the existing duty should be converted into a nominal duty (loud cheers). What shall that limited period be? (loud cheers). What is the nature of that law for this limited period? (loud cheers). My colleagues and myself approached the consideration of that subject unprejudiced by past discussions. Our object has been to propose that law temporary in duration, which appears to us on the whole best suited to meet the exigencies of the present case, and best calculated to provide for the wants of the country during the period for which it is to exist. The rate of duty under the existing law, under all previous laws, the rate of duty on other descriptions of corn, has been regulated by the rate of duty on wheat. We propose, therefore, that the rates of duty on barley, oats, peas, beans, and rye, we propose that these shall be preserved as nearly as possible during the continuance of the law, if it meet with the sanction of Parliament, in the same relation with regard to wheat, that is, that they shall be reduced in amount corresponding to the reduction in wheat (hear, hear). We propose that immediately—that is, after the passing of the act—all grain the produce of British colonies taken out of bond shall be admitted at a nominal duty (hear, hear). I propose that in all cases those restrictions which apply to the importation of meal the produce of grain should be removed. I presume they were established for the protection of the milling interest of the country. I believe them to be wholly unnecessary. They are not applied to flour, the produce of wheat, and I do not see any reason why there should be restrictions on barley meal or any other (cries of “hear, hear”). On the one hand, then, I offer to those who insist on an immediate and unqualified removal of these laws—I offer to them the unrestricted importation, at least on a nominal duty, of all kinds of grain, and all kinds of meal the produce of grain from British colonial possessions out of Europe, at a nominal duty. With regard to one great article—the produce of the United States—an article to the free importation of which the United States attach the utmost importance, namely, maize,—I propose that it shall be admitted at once at a nominal duty (hear, hear). This is the provision with respect to other descriptions of grain

which we propose shall endure during that period which foreign grain is to be subject to a duty. We attempted to meet the objections that were made to the varying price of wheat ; but at the same time, to affix a duty which would be available in point of time, would not answer the purpose which I was desirous of attaining—that of making an immediate reduction, on account of the temporary exigencies of the country, on the present price of foreign grain. We propose, therefore, that the enactment is to endure for three years ; and it shall be to this effect, that till the 1st of February, 1849, the following duties shall be levied on wheat, if imported from any foreign country, when the average price of wheat made up and published in the manner required by law shall be as follows:—if the quarter of wheat be under 48s., the duty shall be 10s. ; above 48s. and under 49s., 9s. ; above 49s. and under 50s., 8s. ; above 50s. and under 51s., 7s. ; above 51s. and under 52s., 6s. ; above 52s. and under 53s., 5s. And whenever the price of corn, made up in the manner in which it is now made up in the *Gazette*, shall exceed 53s., then there shall be an invariable duty of 4s. levied ; that is, that there shall be no temptation to hold corn when the price of corn shall exceed 54s., for the purpose of securing the 1s. duty. The enactments which we shall propose with regard to all other descriptions of grain, will follow the scale which is adopted with regard to wheat. And perhaps it would be more convenient if the House, considering the length of time to which my statement must run, would refer to the tables which will be printed to-morrow, rather than I should go through them now (loud cheers.) It may be sufficient, for the present purpose, to state that the general rule will be adopted. There would now, therefore, be levied on wheat, instead of a duty of 16s., a duty of 4s. ; and every other kind of grain at the present price taken out of bond, for the consumption of the home market, shall be subject to a nominal duty (cries of “hear, hear”). That is the provision and arrangement for the adjustment of this great question, which her Majesty’s Government is induced to offer for the consideration of Parliament. We propose to accompany that arrangement with other provisions, calculated—I will not say to give compensation—but calculated, in my firm belief, materially to advance the interests of that portion of the community which, after the lapse of three years, will be called upon to relinquish that protection which has, up to this time, been extended to them. I believe that this is a just arrangement, and that whilst it will promote the interests of other portions of the country, it will also lead to their own advantage. I thank them for the way in which they have borne their burdens, and for the example which they have thus set to other portions of the community. I am obliged to them for the forbearance they have exercised. I will now state what are the measures with which we propose to accompany this present reduction, and ultimately an extension of the measures which I believe will be of great advantage to that portion of the public, with whose welfare the interests of the whole country are bound up—the farmers. I am perfectly aware that there are burdens which press heavily upon them, some of which are, in my opinion, capable of alleviation—not by putting them on other articles, but by introducing a reform in the

administration of the local measures of which they have reason to complain. But first let me take the existing arrangement with respect to one great source of expenditure—the one great burden which is constantly and justly complained of by those engaged in agricultural pursuits—I mean the amount of rates levied in connexion with highways (hear). Well, now is it not possible, without subjecting other parties to the expense of supporting the highways, to introduce an useful reform in that expenditure, by which they would experience a great relief? I believe it to be possible. Why, what is the practice with respect to the highways of this country? There are 16,000 different local authorities, each of which have the charge of roads. Now, each of these highways becoming of great importance, as railways advance, turnpike roads and highways now of little importance, will become of considerable value and importance. But what can be more defective than the system that places a highway, which is a continuous channel of communication, and which passes through different parishes, under the control of different parishes and different local trustees. The result is, as I have said, that the total number of persons who have the management of the highways in this country is not less than 16,000. It is the practice of these trustees to appoint a surveyor in each parish who knows nothing whatever about the matter. Even if this officer did his duty, still it is an officer that is quite unnecessary. Indeed, the present entire position of the system for regulating the highways is such as required to be materially altered, for it is one which has led to a very bad and defective system of management. One of the modes of management is that which is regulated by act of Parliament, by which several parishes may enter into a voluntary union for the purpose of remedying those grievances; but as it is voluntary, that is the very reason why there is hardly an instance of this act being carried into effect (hear, hear). Now in order to remedy this, what I propose will not only have the effect of affording relief to the agriculturist from the burden which this system imposes on them, but I also propose to alter this power from a voluntary to a compulsory one, in order that the parish authorities may be compelled to practise this superintendence which is now but voluntary; and if you agree to that you will then have only 600 authorities instead of 16,000 (hear, hear). I would propose to make the guardians of the unions the parties to whom it would be compulsory to appoint a competent surveyor to discharge the duties to which I have alluded. With regard to the system of the voluntary union of parishes, I will first read a statement I hold in my hand of the results of a different mode of management adopted in a district of the North of about 70 miles in extent. The Right Hon. Baronet then read the document, in which it was stated that by a different mode of management the expenses had been reduced very materially. In one instance, where the charge upon the parish for the maintenance of highways was from 6*d.* to 9*d.* in the pound, while money was completely thrown away, they now had better roads, and the tax was reduced from 1*s.* 2*d.* to 3*d.* in the pound, and in other districts the reduction was from 3*d.* to 4*d.* in the pound. I now come to deal with a law which has for a long time been very justly

complained of by the agriculturists. I mean the law of settlement (hear, hear). There is one law, of which the agriculturists complain, and very justly, and that is the poor-law settlement. In the time of prosperity many of the people are employed in manufacturing towns, and a great portion of a man's life is often consumed as a manufacturing labourer. The whole of his character for good conduct and industry is derived from the town in which he works. A revulsion in trade takes place, and then what is the course adopted? The man and his family are sent back to the rural district from which they came (hear, hear). The man who has spent his life as a manufacturer returns to the rural districts, his usual occupations are interrupted, and he is quite unfitted for his new occupation. He is transferred to a new home, and separated from his connexions, and of course his moral feeling is destroyed. I will therefore propose, for the purpose of relieving the land from such a burden, and in order to do justice to the labouring man, than an industrial residence in any parish for five years without the commission of any offence, shall give to the individual a settlement, and the power of removing him shall be taken away. In the case of such a man after having devoted five years to labour, his claim for support shall not be on the place of his original settlement, but shall be on the place where the price of his labour and industry has been bestowed (loud cheers). In 1842, when great distress prevailed in the manufacturing districts, the practice was that the manufacturers who had settlements in the agricultural districts were at once returned to their original settlement. What I now propose will be a great improvement, and, therefore, after the passing of this law, no person who has resided for more than five years in any parish shall be removed from that parish. No residence in prison, in any lunatic asylum, in hospital, or in any poor-house, or receiving relief, to be counted as part of the time, and neither shall it be reckoned as an interruption to the time. Not only shall this extend to the man, but to his children, and to the children of his wife—legitimate or illegitimate, under the age of 16 years, and such children shall not be removed where the removal of the person himself is forbidden, and there shall not be the power of separating the children from their parents, and that every man shall have the power, the right of requiring support, not from his place of birth, but settlement. At present, immediately upon the death of a labouring man in the manufacturing districts the widow of that man is removed. Now, we shall propose that no widow residing with her husband at the time of his death shall be removable for 12 months from the parish in which her husband resided. At present when a man's health is wasted by extreme labour he has no course to adopt but to leave work. Now, we propose that in sickness an asylum shall be found for him, and there shall be no power of removal from the manufacturing to the rural districts (hear, hear). This, I think, will be considered an alteration of the law by which great social advantages will be obtained, and at the same time relief to the agricultural districts (hear, hear). I now approach another matter in respect to which I am prepared to advise that which, without loss to any other portion of the community, will be a great

advantage, not only to the agricultural, but all the best interests of the country. There is a dread of competition if the duty is removed, but that competition may be met by skill and industry, and in order that the English farmer may compete with the foreigner, we propose that the State shall encourage agricultural improvements. Now, on that subject the evidence with respect to the entailed estates is most important, because it shows that, by means of improvement there is a means of greatly improving the produce of the land. It shows, also, that there are immense districts in this country that might be very greatly improved by means of draining. The difficulty attending on any scheme of meeting the defective system of draining, is shown in the report I have alluded to. There have been various schemes proposed, and some of them by an Hon. Friend of mine, to facilitate agricultural improvements, but they have been met with great difficulties in consequence of the interference of the farmers. The great difficulty has been the raising of money on entailed estates, so as to afford satisfactory security to those who might advance it (hear, hear). To obviate this, I intend that the public credit shall be employed in order to effect agricultural improvements, by advancing sums of money on certain terms. Those sums of money I intend shall be advanced when application is made that improvements are to be effected, accompanied with a statement and a proper estimate of how it is to be expended (hear, hear). Hitherto, if we made advances of Exchequer bills, it was on a high rate of interest; but in the present case, in advising an application of the public credit to effect agricultural improvements, I propose that the Exchequer Bill Commissioners shall be empowered to make advances to the proprietors of estates at a moderate annual charge. These grants, I propose, shall be made through the advice of a Board that is now in existence. I mean the Board of Enclosures. The Enclosure Commissioners, I propose, shall make all inquiries respecting what parts of the country should undergo improvement; they shall receive all applications for money, calculating the value of the land, the improvements proposed, and the amount of the expense they will cost; which done they shall report the result in a circular to the Exchequer-bill Commissioners, who in that case shall on their advice make the advances recommended. It being arranged that the money so advanced shall have paid on it an annual rate of interest, and also that the principal shall be repaid in regular yearly instalments (hear). But in this course I propose that in all cases where there are heavy burdens on land—where there are prior claims to meet by advances on mortgage or otherwise—that no advances shall be made by the Exchequer-bill Commissioners without the consent of the party having the lien. In all such cases, however, I apprehend parties will perceive it to be their interest to consent to such advances, as they will lead to great improvements in the land, and do much to enhance their interest in the property. I believe an arrangement of this kind will be found a great benefit; that the objections to it on the ground of entailed estates may be obviated, and the expenses so applied, I am certain, as to advance the interests of all proprietors, and lead to great agricultural improvements in the country (hear, hear). I do not

limit the amount of improvements to these merely local advantages. I believe that the spirit of improvement generated by this plan will go on progressively. I believe that every proprietor of land will follow the example set him by scientific men, and strive to improve his estate, and that this innovation on the part of the Government will lead to an extended spirit of agricultural improvement over the country (hear, hear, hear). Well, that is another mode in which we propose to enable the agricultural interest to meet the competition with which they may be threatened on the withdrawal of the duty. Now, with respect to the direct local burdens, I have given the most serious consideration to this subject, and I cannot advise any material alteration of the system on which the assessments take place. There is no doubt that a sum is levied under the name of poor rate, which is employed partly for the purpose of relieving the poor, and partly for other objects. It is said, and said with some apparent justice, that this is a charge upon land, and that, therefore, there ought to be a very great alteration in the principle on which levies of that kind were made. Now, in point of fact, this charge is not a charge upon land (hear, hear). As far as this charge is concerned, the opposition is not one between the country and the towns—the opposition is not one between land and other interests—the opposition is one that arises between real and personal property. But it must be remembered that real property includes mines, houses, and manufactories, and it is such real property as this that is subject to this assessment. It might possibly be considered just, and it might perhaps be advantageous to make personal property subject to a charge for the maintenance of the poor; but you must recollect that the charge is a local charge, and not a general tax. The land could, however, gain nothing by making personal property liable from this rate. It will be no advantage to the land, if the same principle were carried out in Manchester, Stockport, and other manufacturing towns. It would be only a different distribution of the burden within that locality. You may say, subject personal property to the charge, but if you do, you must also subject personal property in the rural districts (hear, hear). But now, how will you levy small charges on houses? It is possible to levy a charge for the general purposes of the country; but if you come to levy an amount small as this on personal property, you may depend on it that this sort of inquisition will not be tolerated. So far from it being a benefit to the land—considering that the charge is always a local one—so far from it being a benefit to the land to raise the amount by means of an inquisition instituted by mere parochial authorities, it would be a burden to the land. Now, I am quite willing to admit that there might be parishes in which there may be a large rural and a large manufacturing population. Well, in parishes so situated, then, I do admit that I think the assessment an unjust one. I am not prepared to suggest any mode of removing that evil, but I cannot think that there would be any advantage whatever to the land, considering that the charge is a local one in the establishment of an institution, for the purpose of making inquiries as to the amount to be raised. If you do so, you must inquire into the profits of trade, and the profits of the former might also be made the subject of inquiry. You certainly have

been charged upon personal property ; but even there exceptions were taken—[The rest of the sentence was lost, in consequence of the Right Hon. Baronet at the moment turning his back to the gallery]. I am aware that the State might take upon itself the maintenance of the poor ; but I am sure that there would be the greatest objection to that ; and while the charge continues to be a local one, my firm belief is, that the landed interest would not benefit by that course. I am not prepared, therefore, to suggest any amendment to the present principle. But I have always certainly felt that there was a fair claim for direct relief from some local fund. Some of these burdens would probably fall upon land, and from those land should be relieved. I cannot mention any compensation, but I believe that we lay a foundation for a great essential improvement by taking upon the Government some of those charges which now bear upon land. Some of those charges were brought under the notice of the House by the Honourable Member for Somersetshire last year. I was then obliged to admit that the relief that we should devise for the agricultural interest would be but small ; but I do say, now, when you are about to deprive land ultimately of protection, that I think the circumstances are changed, and that we may relieve the land to a great extent. You have the opportunity of ascertaining how this may be effected, and I would only take the cases of felony, the expenses of which are always thrown upon the land, and perhaps a still greater illustration, the expenses of which arise from the offences which are classed as misdemeanours. By these means the charges that have hitherto been borne by the land ought to be removed, and that those expenses should be borne by the State, so as to render them equally imposed on all classes of the community. I think, therefore, that the funds necessary for this purpose ought to be provided by the country, and that some provision should be made for the removal of these difficulties ; and I sincerely trust that no unnecessary discussion will ensue on these provisions. Now, with respect to these circumstances, it ought not to be forgotten that there is a material difference between England and Ireland. In Ireland there are the peculiar land tenures,—in England the matter is different. We have here our accustomed tenures ; but in Ireland they have no such advantage. In Ireland a material benefit would be obtained by the ministration to trade and to advantages which are likely to be enjoyed by the agricultural interests. The benefits to be enjoyed by that interest are not to be taken from the advantages enjoyed by the country. But in Ireland there is a consideration of public convenience as well as profit, and it should be observed, in order to come to a correct conclusion, that the whole of the community are affected by the decision at which you will arrive to-night. Now, the burdens on land materially affect that decision, and I think that the expenses imposed in consequence of this source of national inquiry, ought to be borne by the state rather than by the landed interest ; and that if even it should be imposed generally, it ought not to bear heavily on this part of the United Kingdom. Now, if we take a fair view of the burdens, and of the advantages which land has to suffer or enjoy, I believe that the benefits will be found to preponderate, and that the labourer will enjoy the profits which

are likely to accrue to the State at large, and particularly to this portion of the United Kingdom. I believe this will be the means of placing the police force directly under the entire control of the Government, and prevent the possibility of all interference by the local interest (hear, hear). It will make the system of police as perfect as you can possibly make it, and exclude all power of local knowledge, or local interference. I propose, therefore, that the Executive Government take under their control the rural police of Ireland; and in order to make that control as complete as possible, I propose that the expense of the force shall be paid out of the public Exchequer (cries of "hear, hear"). In fact, as some return for the withdrawal of protection, Government are disposed to recommend that the whole charge of the rural police in Ireland shall be borne by the public. There is another charge borne by the landed interest of this country to which I wish to allude, and which we propose to share with them; I allude to medical relief (hear, hear). If the performance of any one part of the functions of the Poor Law Commissioners has given more satisfaction to the country than another, it is the way in which they have administered medical relief (hear, hear). And yet, I am sorry to say, this description of relief has often been extremely defective, and many distressing cases have often been brought before our eyes in consequence of this defect (hear, hear). We propose, therefore, to improve the medical relief afforded to the poor and destitute of the country (cries of "hear, hear"). And for the purpose of giving the Executive greater control over the distribution of medical relief in England and Scotland, I propose to take one half of the charge of the whole medical relief of the country. Thus we shall be enabled to do away with the objections which have been urged by the guardians, to the interference of the Poor-Law Commissioners in the matter of medical relief, by the fact that we contribute one half of the expenses, which the relief occasions. I estimate that the amount of charge will be not less than £100,000 in England, and £15,000 in Scotland. In Ireland there will be a separate law which passed this House some time ago, and which will occupy the attention of the other House of Parliament in the course of the present session. With respect to Scotland there is a separate charge to which I wish to refer, and from which I think Scotland ought to be released. The expenses of maintaining a prison in Scotland I think ought to be borne by the public rather than by the landed interest; and for the satisfaction of the Perthshire landlords, I may state that the expense of maintaining that establishment is to be removed from the landed interest and thrown on the public. There is another subject, having reference to the union workhouses, to which I wish to direct the attention of the House. I mean the defective system of education which exists in some of these establishments. I am anxious to avoid the raising of any religious question, but I think we may safely interfere in this matter without doing so. We propose in no way to interfere with the appointments of the officers, and to avoid, as I have stated the raising of any religious question, the appointment of the schoolmaster shall still remain with the guardians, but still we shall be ready, if the guardians cannot procure them, to undertake the ex-

penze and duty of providing competent schoolmasters and schoolmistresses. If, however, the guardians claim the right of providing these officers themselves, we require that the officers shall possess ample qualification for the performance of the duties which shall devolve upon them. We shall claim the right of inspection, because if the schoolmasters and the schoolmistresses shall be found incompetent, we shall be ready at the public charge to find competent and respectable persons to supply their places. It is our intention as well to undertake the duty of educating the children of the destitute poor, and it shall be our care to provide proper and competent masters and mistresses for that purpose. Then, again, with respect to auditors, the amount of remuneration to be given to them shall be the same as that of the commissioners. Now, observe, in almost every case in which I have proposed any remission of the burdens on land, at the same time I propose the attainment of some great object connected with the public good (hear). If this general scheme shall meet with the approval of the great body of men, at a very early period all restrictions upon food will be removed, and instantly other duties which apply to the importation of food. With respect to clothing there will be liberty to purchase in the cheapest market. I do hope both parties will reflect, that instantly, with respect to many articles of food there will be a free importation. With respect to all a free importation at an early date. Whether the measures I have proposed will be sufficient to satisfy both parties, I cannot say, but I sincerely hope the entire scheme will be fairly and deliberately considered by both sides, and that you will reflect upon the consequences likely to result from the immediate rejection of these measures (hear, hear). I do not ask for an immediate expression of opinion at this moment, but, after the interval of a short time, I hope you will pay attention to my proposal. Permit me now, Sir, to conclude with two observations—one upon foreign policy and our commercial interests, and one having reference to our own domestic concerns. Sir, I fairly avow that in making these great reductions on the produce of foreign countries, I have no guarantee that other countries will follow our example. Wearied by our long-enduring efforts (hear, hear,) we have resolved to consult our own immediate interests (loud cheers from all parts of the House). We wish not to oppress other countries, or ourselves, by continuing excessive duties and the encouragement of unlawful taxation (hear, hear, and cheers). We have no communication, therefore, whatever with any other Government in making the proposals which we have submitted. I cannot promise you that France will make any considerable alterations in her tariff in consequence of our proposed alterations. I cannot promise you that Russia will prove her gratitude to us for our reduction upon tallow. You may tax your articles, therefore, in opposition to our present plan, to meet their ingratitude, but yet you will exact nothing thereby. I may, perhaps, be told, that in many foreign countries, since the relaxation of our duties, the people have been benefited, and yet they have not followed our example, not only have not followed our example, but have actually increased the duties on the admission of our manufactured goods into their countries

(hear). I quite admit that fact. I give the whole benefit of that argument. I rely upon that fact as a positive proof of the present policy of foreign countries. It is a fact that other countries have not followed our example, nay, that they have in fact, in some cases, highered the duties upon the admission of our goods. But what has been the result of that policy upon the amount of your exports? (hear, hear). You have defied the regulations of other countries (cries of "hear, hear"). Your export has greatly increased (hear). The trade of the smuggler has been in operation in consequence of the policy of other countries with respect to the admission and exportation of articles of manufacture, despite the strict regulations of continental countries. Your exports, whatever be the tariffs of other countries, or the apparent ingratitude with which they have treated you—your export trade, I say,—has greatly increased. By the remission of duties upon raw material, you have been able to exceed the amount of the past revenues of the country. And, notwithstanding the existence of hostile tariffs, the declared value of British exports has increased by £10,000,000, within the last three years. I say, then, that hostile tariffs, so far from being an argument against the removal of restrictive duties, furnish a strong argument in its favour; and depend upon it, that although other nations may not at first join with you in the removal of these duties, depend upon it, I say, that your example will ultimately prevail (hear, hear). When your example could be quoted in favour of restrictions it was largely taken. And when your example can be quoted in favour of relaxation, as being conducive to your interests, it will have its proper weight. It may not be at first received by Governments or foreign boards, but depend upon it, that the exercise of reason and a consideration of the common interest will induce a relaxation of these duties (hear). That is my firm belief; I see something of this already at work in the last accounts from the United States, notwithstanding there are some indications of a hostile spirit in that country. I see something of that spirit at work. Look, for instance, at the report lately made by the Secretary of the United States (hear, hear). That shows that the example is not altogether unavailing. In that report Mr. Walker states that in the conflict of opposing tariffs they sacrificed the interests of commerce, agriculture, and navigation of their country. As well might they impose monarchical and aristocratical institutions upon their Government. Let commerce, he says, be as free and as independent as our Government, and advises them to open their ports to all the world, and nation after nation would then follow their example (cries of "hear, hear"). And if the question should be asked, Who shall begin this work of removing these restrictions? it is answered, he says, by the fact that England had already abolished the duties on most of their exports: they had reduced their duty on the importation of cotton, on bread-stuffs, provisions, and other articles. The reduction of the tariff, he adds, would lead to an increased amount of revenue. Here, then, Sir, is the admission that you have set the example—that you reduced the amount of import and export without any preliminary engagement with any other Government. I can give you more examples; I can give a country, opposed as a country

can be to the United States, now entertaining liberal views. I must say, in justice to the Sovereign who now rules over that country, that I have seen documents written by him, containing, with respect to freedom of commercial intercourse, opinions as liberal as could come from any manufacturer (hear). That sovereign is constantly urging a relaxation of all commercial duties, and I do not despair that at a very early period his wishes will be carried into effect. Austria is showing an inclination to follow the same example, and also other countries (hear, hear). Sir, I do not despair that the example which we are going to set will be followed by every other country on the continent, and that they shall quote you as an example for pursuing a similar course (hear, hear, and cheers). Sir, I trust this freedom of commercial intercourse will constitute a new bond of peace (loud cheers), and that this House will not oppose any measure which may have such a tendency ; for the permanent continuance of peace will prevent us from being exposed to sudden fluctuations, and will gain for us new customers. And I do think we should neglect no opportunity to gain such an advantage, by having an abundance of cheap food in this country (loud cheering). You may say that the object of these alterations is to foster the love of gain, and to minister to the desire of accumulating money. I advise these measures on no such grounds. I believe that the accumulation of wealth, that is to say the increase of capital, is a main element in our prosperity and greatness (hear, hear). I believe it is one of the means by which we can maintain the eminence we have so long enjoyed. I have attempted to show, that abundance of provisions is a necessary element in our strength. Such abundance contributes not only to the accumulation of wealth, but is directly conducive to the alleviation of the public burthens, by increasing the amount of the revenue (hear, hear). It contributes to the alleviation of local burthens by diminishing the claims of pauperism, but, more than all, it is conducive to the spread of morality, by diminishing those temptations to crime which arise from poverty and distress (loud cheers). I ask you, therefore, to give your consent to those measures, not on any narrow view or principle connected with the accumulation of wealth. I ask you to consent to them on a far higher principle ; on the principle that, threatened as you are with heavy calamity, solicitous as you are for the public creditor, you will find that the true sources of increased revenue are increased comforts, and the taste for luxuries among the people. Your revenue is then increased by an unseen and involuntary taxation arising from the increased consumption of articles subject to duty. I ask you to consent to this proposal on the proof I have adduced that abundance and cheapness of provisions lead to diminished crime and to increased morality. I could bring to you many instances of what are the social effects of this comparative cheapness and abundance. It has been said that there is no actual scarcity, and why then any fear? Now what is scarcity? (hear, hear, from the Opposition). It is altogether a relative term (hear, hear). That which is not scarcity to us may be scarcity to the masses of the people (hear, hear). Remember also that the lapse of three years of plenty is an important era in the history of a country. Three years of abun-

dant provisions and comparative cheapness have altered the characteristics of this country. That which was not scarcity in the hard winter of 1842 would be scarcity now. That which would not then be a denial of comforts would be felt severely now. There would be much more real suffering sustained in January, 1846, after the enjoyment of three years of comparative abundance, by being put on short allowance, than there would have been under similar circumstances in January, 1843. I advise you not to think that the general current of prosperity which has prevailed for three years is always to continue. We have had three years of abundant harvests. Do not mistake me. I am not insensible to that plenty which arises from the favour of Providence. I do not say that the importation of corn from foreign countries could compensate for the home supply (hear, hear, from the Conservative benches). But I entreat you will consider whether or no that constitutes a reason why, when there is danger of an insufficient supply, we should not remedy the evil as far as we can by permitting the importation of foreign corn (hear). I was told the other day, that in one of the battalions of the guards, in this city, the increase in the number of regimental furloughs applied for by private soldiers, and the number actually granted has been rapidly increasing during the last three years. I inquired the reason, it is a small incident, but it made a great impression on me at the time. I was told that the number of furloughs had increased nearly double in 1845, the reason being that twice the number of soldiers availed themselves of the privilege (a laugh). The fact was that the friends of these soldiers were in so much more comfortable circumstances than they had been previously, that they were constantly inviting them to spend some time in the country (cheers, and some cries of "Oh, oh!" from the Ministerial benches). There was a striking instance of the moral advantages of this abundance. In this case it facilitated the intercourse of friends and united those who must be divided in periods of difficulty and distress. It permits the soldier to revisit his home and to return to his duty with feelings qualifying him to perform it (cheers). I was asked on a former evening, why I attempted to disturb a state of prosperity such as I have described (hear, hear, hear, from the Conservative benches). I was told I admitted that during a period of three years there had been comparative abundance and prosperity, and that this had all existed coeval with the Corn Law of 1842. I was asked, why disturb an arrangement which had worked so well? My answer is, that up to the month of October last, all these indications of prosperity continued; but in the month of October, and for three or four months since, there has been an apparent sympathy between the prosperity of the manufacturing districts and the price of provisions. Now, here is one of the circulars issued in Manchester, containing an account of the state of trade. In the circular, which is dated the 22nd January, it is stated, "The anticipations which we ventured to make in our last annual circular, as to the prosperity of the year on which we were then entering were fully realized during the first nine months. For that time we had not only a continuance of the prosperity of 1844, but it had reached to a degree unexampled in

manufacturing history, exciting every branch of trade, and acting beneficially on the social condition of the population. The causes which combined to produce this state of things were—steadiness of price, demand equal to the supply, low rates of prices for the raw material, and abundance of money at moderate rates of interest. Unfortunately, there have been reverses in several of those elements of prosperity, which, acting on each other, led to a state of embarrassment, under which we have laboured during the last three months, and under which we are still labouring in a mitigated form. Our home trade, up to September, was unprecedentedly large ; but, from the causes above mentioned, an almost total suspension has taken place for two months, followed by a moderate business requiring great caution.” We are not to conclude that at the time of which I am speaking these indications of prosperity continue. I confess that that which has passed since October, 1845, does constitute one item which has produced the conclusions to which I have come. These, Mr. Greene, are the proposals which on the part of the Government I offer for the adjustment and ultimate arrangement of a great question. I cannot appeal to any narrow feeling—to fear—as an inducement to you to listen to my proposal. There may be agitation, but it is agitation which has not reached the great mass of the labouring population. There is a total absence of all excitement. I admit that it is perfectly possible, without danger to the public peace, to continue the existing system. I cannot, therefore, act upon your fears. This I believe to be true, that there has been a great change effected in the opinions of the great mass of the community on the subject of the Corn Law—(Opposition cheers)—that there is now between the master manufacturer and the operative classes a common conviction, which did not prevail in 1842, or at any former period, that it is for the public advantage that these laws should be repealed (hear, hear, from the Opposition). But I believe that although this general union of opinion exists, still there is nothing but general contentment and general loyalty (hear, hear). I will add confidence in the justice and in the wisdom of this House (hear). There has been anxiety enough, but in so far as I can judge, the example which you have set, in taking on yourselves great pecuniary burdens, in order that you might relieve the labouring classes from taxation to which they were subject, has produced the deepest impression and the most beneficial effects. I believe that there is in your justice and your wisdom the most perfect confidence ; but although this is a time of peace and loyalty—although there is a perfect calm, except in so far as agitation among the principal manufacturers may interrupt it—(a laugh)—although you are not subject to any coercion whatever, I entreat you to bear in mind that the aspect of affairs may be changed—that we may have to contend with worse harvests than we had in the last year, and it may be wise to avail ourselves of the present opportunity of making that adjustment which I believe must ultimately be made, and which cannot be long withheld without engendering feelings of animosity between different classes of her Majesty’s subjects. In the sincere belief that the settlement I now propose is not unfair to any

interest, and proposing that settlement with the most sincere conviction that, accompanied by the precautionary measures I have described, it will not inflict any injury upon the agricultural interest, I should deeply lament the failure—and I should lament it exclusively on public grounds—the failure of the attempt which, at the instance of the Government of which I am the representative, I this night recommend to your most calm and patient consideration, with no other feeling of interest in the question at issue than that it may conduce to the maintenance of friendly feeling between the different classes of the community, by giving new securities for the permanence of domestic peace, and new assurances of contentment and loyalty amongst all classes of her Majesty's subjects, by increasing the comforts, and bettering the condition of the great body of the people.—[The Right Honourable Baronet, who had spoken upwards of four hours, concluded amidst loud cheers from both sides of the House ; but more particularly from the Opposition.]

SIR ROBERT PEEL rose again in a few minutes after he had concluded his statement, and said he wished to allow any time which the House might deem reasonable for the consideration of his proposition before the discussion of it should take place. He did not expect that any unreasonable time would be required, but he would be entirely guided by the sense of the House. He suggested Wednesday for proceeding with the further consideration of the question.

The resolutions brought in by the Right Hon. Baronet were then read *pro forma* as follows :—

That in lieu of the duties now payable on the importation of corn, grain, meal, or flour, there shall be paid until the 1st day of February, 1849, the following duties, viz. :—

If imported from any foreign country.

#### WHEAT.

Whenever the average price of wheat, made up and published in the manner required by law, shall be for every quarter,

Under 48s. the duty shall be for every quarter				10s.	0d.
48s.	—	49s.	ditto	ditto	9s. 0d.
49s.	—	50s.	ditto	ditto	8s. 0d.
50s.	—	51s.	ditto	ditto	7s. 0d.
51s.	—	52s.	ditto	ditto	6s. 0d.
52s.	—	53s.	ditto	ditto	5s. 0d.
53s.	and upwards		ditto	ditto	4s. 0d.

#### BARLEY, BEAR, OR BIGG.

Whenever the average, &c.

Under 26s. the duty shall be for every quarter				5s.	0d.
26s.	—	27s.	ditto	ditto	4s. 6d.
27s.	—	28s.	ditto	ditto	4s. 0d.
28s.	—	29s.	ditto	ditto	3s. 6d.
29s.	—	30s.	ditto	ditto	3s. 0d.
30s.	—	31s.	ditto	ditto	2s. 6d.
31s.	and upwards		ditto	ditto	2s. 0d.

## OATS.

Whenever the average price of oats, made up and published in the manner required by law, shall be for every quarter,

Under 18s. the duty shall be for every quarter				4s.	0d.
18s.	—	19s.	ditto	ditto	3s. 6d.
19s.	—	20s.	ditto	ditto	3s. 0d.
20s.	—	21s.	ditto	ditto	2s. 6d.
21s.	—	22s.	ditto	ditto	2s. 0d.
22s.	and upwards		ditto	ditto	1s. 6d.

From and after the 1st of February, 1849, there shall be paid the following duties:—Wheat, barley, bear, or bigg, &c., 1s.; wheatmeal, barleymeal, oatmeal, &c., for every cwt. 4½d.

SIR R. INGLIS wished to know what would be the amount of increased expenditure to be saddled on the country by his measures?

SIR R. PEELE rose again to suggest that the discussion on his resolution should be taken on that day week. His measure involved a great remission of taxation, and, therefore, a defalcation of the revenue. Besides, it incurred an annual charge amounting at least to £600,000.

MR. S. O'BRIEN suggested to Sir R. Peel the propriety of considering whether this day fortnight would not be an early day for the consideration of this scheme. The voices of the farmers of England could not reach the House in less than that time.

MR. HUME hoped that Sir R. Peel would not yield to the postponement now required.

SIR R. PEELE asked Mr. Hume to allow him to conduct his own affairs. He then suggested that the House should enter on this discussion on Thursday week.

MR. MILES begged for further time. Why not take the discussion on Monday week?

SIR R. PEELE assented to that suggestion; but informed the House that he should then proceed *de die in diem* with the discussion of this question. He could not exactly declare the loss which the revenue would experience by the adoption of his proposition. He thought last year that by the alteration in the excise duties he should lose one million; but the revenue from that source was now as good as it was before the alteration. He expected to lose four millions by the reduction of the customs' duties; but nothing of the kind occurred. He was, therefore, unwilling to make an estimate of the loss which would accrue to the revenue. The charge which his scheme would impose on the Consolidated Fund would be an annual charge of £513,000.

In answer to a question from Lord John Russell relative to the mode of proceeding in order to obtain a decision of the House on the subject,

SIR R. PEELE observed, that he had no objection to bring the resolution on the Corn Laws first under consideration; but whatever course should appear most advisable to the House, the same would be most convenient to the Government.

MR. LIDDELL had supported Sir R. Peel in his previous reforms, but in doing so he had uniformly kept in view the principle of protection. He denied that the surrender of this principle would benefit the Irish peasantry. The recent prices of corn had been sufficiently moderate to justify the continuance of the existing law. Great evils might be expected to result from its abrogation; and amongst others, a serious diminution in the incomes of the clergy. The compensation offered to the agricultural interest was wholly inadequate. On these grounds he would oppose the measure.

CAPTAIN ROUS would support most zealously the measure of Sir Robert Peel, believing it to be for the benefit of the country.

MR. S. O'BRIEN harangued on the virtue of Parliamentary consistency.

LORD INGESTRIE protested against Sir Robert Peel's measure, as calculated to prejudice the country.

MR. SCOTT admitted that public content depended much upon abundance, though he thought that abundance should be derived from domestic produce. He disapproved of Sir Robert Peel's measure, because he thought the compensation clauses would invest Government with inquisitorial powers.

LORD G. BENTINCK inquired whether Sir R. Peel intended to introduce any measure to alter the present arrangement respecting tithe. It was unjust to require the landowner to pay tithe, on the supposition that wheat was 58s. 8d. the quarter, while the actual price might be 45s.

SIR R. PEEL did not expect that the price of wheat would fall materially; and consequently he did not think that there would be any need of a measure to regulate afresh the tithe averages.

SIR J. TYRRELL (who spoke from the Opposition side of the House) denied that the existing prosperity of the country had resulted from Sir R. Peel's financial reforms, and thence he argued, it was fallacious to expect advantages from an extension of the principle upon which those experiments were founded.

COLONEL SIBTHORP considered the conduct of Sir R. Peel the greatest insult that could have been offered to the House.

THE EARL OF MARCH called upon the various members of the Cabinet to declare their opinion. He quoted a recent speech which had been delivered by Mr. Sidney Herbert before his constituents in favour of protection principles, and commented upon the discrepancy between them and the Government scheme.

MR. S. HERBERT would reserve to a future period the full explanation of the reasons which had produced his conversion to Free Trade principles, and at that time he should be prepared to defend Sir R. Peel's measures.

MR. P. HOWARD said a few words.

MR. GROGAN inquired how the loss which the reduction of duties would entail upon the revenue would be provided for.

SIR R. PEEL had that confidence in the elasticity of the resources of the country, that he thought no additional taxation would be needed. He did not intend to augment the rate of the Income Tax.

MR. CURTIS would not pledge himself, but would give the sub-

ject his candid attention, and should be happy to find it produce a final adjustment. He offered, on behalf of the hop growers, to relinquish all protection.

MR. BENNETT wished Sir R. Peel had proposed the repeal of the malt tax.

MR. B. ESCOTT supported the scheme, and expressed his satisfaction that a fortnight had been allowed for the consideration of the matter; in which interval he doubted not that the country would generally express its approbation.

MR. WAKLEY considered the measure most favourable to the interests of the working people, and it had his hearty approval. He was prepared to decide at once, and condemned delay as furnishing opportunity for agitation.

MR. NEWDEGATE defended agricultural agitation, as a legitimate means of ascertaining the views of the constituencies.

COLONEL T. WOOD (Middlesex) cordially approved the measure, as being likely to benefit the country.

LORD NEWPORT asked for a deliberate appeal to the constituencies.

MR. AGLIONBY supported the measure, as a comprehensive scheme of Free Trade.

MR. G. BANKES believed the tenant-farmers would derive no advantage from the compensation proposed to be given by the bill to the agricultural interest. The grounds on which that interest claimed protection, would not admit of compromise or compensation.

The CHAIRMAN then reported progress.

The other orders were disposed of, and the House adjourned.

### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9.

On the motion that the Speaker do now leave the chair,

MR. P. MILES rose, and moved as an amendment, that the House do resolve itself into committee that day six months. He made that motion, not because he wished to inflict on the House the tediousness of a long debate, but because he considered that the most fitting time for taking the discussion on the question which had been raised by the measures proposed on the part of the Government. He trusted that he approached the consideration of the question with a just sense of its magnitude, and that no expressions might fall from him which should tend to excite any angry feelings. It was, indeed, of too important—of too comprehensive, a character to be treated on mere party grounds. It was a question which touched the interests of every man in this country, the highest and the lowest, the merchant and the agriculturist, the landlord and the tenant, the operative and the artisan; and it was a question of far greater magnitude than the Reform Bill, because it implied a change in the policy which had been pursued in this country from the earliest period of its history, and under which it had risen to great eminence—a policy which all nations had long followed, and which all still continued to follow (cheers). Whether the country was prepared for this great change—whether the constituencies were prepared to give their sanction to the measure of the Right Honourable Gentleman—he could not venture to say; but he (Mr. Miles) could not hesitate to declare that on a question of such vital importance

not consent to follow the Right Hon. Baronet. The Corn Law, it would be admitted, had worked well, so far as a law could work well (cheers). So far as calculation could go it had, he thought, answered the Right Honourable Baronet's expectations. The object of that law was to give a fair price to the farmer. What did he consider a fair price now? If the Right Honourable Baronet was right in his views of the effect which would attend the repeal of the Corn Laws, what became of the "cheap loaf" argument of the honourable gentleman opposite? There was a vast difference between the cheapness produced by a good harvest, and the cheapness produced by the introduction of foreign corn. The Right Honourable Baronet had overlooked the distinction. Mr. Huskisson had described the importation of foreign grain as the sure forerunner of scarcity; while the same great authority held that a steady home supply was the only sure guarantee for a steady home market. He (Mr. Miles) had never thought that the Right Honourable Baronet's measures would lead to the utter ruin of the agricultural interest; but they would cause great agricultural distress, and tend to lower wages; the working classes would feel their effects before the higher orders. When these measures passed, free trade would be the principle of her Majesty's government, and protection could not be taken from one interest without its being taken from all. What would be said of the navigation laws, of reciprocity treaties? Where the sweeping current was to pass when once the barrier was broken down, he could not say; but, if justice were done to all parties, protection ought to be continued. The Noble Lord must outbid the Right Honourable Baronet. Would the League dissolve—retire into private life? Agitation would not be put down; it would only be shifted to new ground. Then the free trade proposed was a one-sided free trade. This country would be inundated with foreign goods, but have no corresponding advantage; and already the Swiss and French competed in hosiery, cotton goods, cutlery, &c., with British manufacturers. Wages on railroads or public works might for a time be higher, but ultimately all would be reduced. The Right Honourable Baronet had laid great stress on the protection he was taking from the manufacturers, but the amount of it was altogether insufficient. There were other circumstances which gave the manufacturer great natural advantages over the agriculturist. His establishment was much better conducted (ironical cheers from the Opposition). What he meant was, that the manufacturer could survey all his workmen at one glance, and therefore had them more under control than the farmer (hear, hear). Whether the sun shone or the rain poured, the factory went on the same; but the farmers were subject to the vicissitudes of the weather. The farmer could not, like the manufacturer, command twelve hours labour from his men throughout the year. It was a matter of great doubt whether manufactures and agriculture could be governed by the same laws and principles (hear), as regards the restriction of labour. The agriculturist, however, would have, under this system, to tax the energies of his labourers to the utmost. The manufacturer also had an advantage over the agriculturist in the burdens they respectively bore. One of the largest cotton manufactories in the country—one, the annual pro-

duce of which was £170,000 worth of goods, and which paid £30,000 a-year in wages, paid only £530 in direct burdens (hear). There was nothing to counterbalance this in favour of the farmer. The compensation offered to the landed interest—some £400,000 spread over the whole country—was not sufficient; the agriculturists would almost have been better pleased had the Right Hon. Baronet thought fit to offer them nothing at all (Opposition cheers). There was another article of produce, which, however, did not strictly come within the subject: he meant sugar. In 1844 and 1845 certain advantages were given to free-grown sugar over slave-grown sugar, and it might fairly have been supposed that a sufficient trial would have been given to the new system. But now the growers of free-labour sugar were told that they could stand a little more competition. Why, what was to protect them from being told in 1848 that the West Indian colonists had already derived great benefit from competition, and, therefore, that they must be subjected to still more. On the other hand, if the farmer was obliged to sell his corn at the cheapest market, why should he be compelled to buy his sugar at the dearest? (hear). This measure of the Right Hon. Baronet was one most unfavourable to the colonies generally. Extend the principle of the Canada Corn Bill generally, and he (Mr. Miles) would then not object to vote for the plan. If Free Trade principles were to prevail they ought to be extended to the colonies; and the manufacturer of this country ought not to be allowed to have a monopoly of the colonial market ("hear," from Lord John Russell). It was said that it was desirable to extend manufactures in this country. The evidence of Horner's report proved that their activity was already sufficiently alarming (hear). Upon the whole, he believed that they would be acting for the best interests of the country, for the benefit of commerce, of the colonies, and of the working classes, by advocating protection for every branch of British industry. The Hon. Gentleman, who was very imperfectly heard towards the close of his speech, concluded by moving his amendment.

SIR W. HEATHCOTE rose to second the amendment. He said, that in opposing the measure of the Right Hon. Baronet, he was desirous of altogether avoiding the practice that had in some quarters become general of charging the Right Hon. Gentleman with personal dishonesty in having introduced it. He asked both the House and his Right Hon. Friend, to believe that he utterly disclaimed the use of any such weapons as these. It was true that he looked upon the measure itself as delusive, as based on grounds separately inconclusive, and inconsistent when combined; and that he thought the Right Hon. Baronet, in his eagerness to accomplish a great result, overlooked the evil of shaking a settlement which appeared to the public mind to be based on the good faith of the present Parliament (hear). He believed also that the Right Hon. Baronet had not sufficiently perceived the violent shock that was being given to public confidence in public men (hear), when they suddenly changed their opinions, without any apparent change of circumstances, in matters on which the public mind at large was excited (hear, hear). But to suppose that the Right Hon. Baronet was pretending

a conviction he did not feel, or that he had any other object in view than to promote what he thought to be the best interests of the country, appeared to him (Sir W. Heathcote) to be a gratuitous assumption calculated to give the supporters of the Government much advantage (hear). The plan professed to be a large and comprehensive scheme of Free Trade. If it were so, and if it was at the same time impartial, he would still look on it as a step in a downward course, and one which was calculated to lead to evil. He was not afraid to avow, that on his conscience he believed the legislation of the last twenty years in the same direction, had produced greater evils than had been supposed, and the amount of which had been concealed only through the enormous growth of our colonial trade—a trade which, be it remembered, had been carried on on principles antagonist to those of this measure (hear, hear). The measure, however, was not impartial—it did not take protection from all alike. In some cases the discrimination of duties did not meet the necessity of the case, in others it operated in the inverse ratio to the effect calculated upon. The different classes of domestic industry demanded protection in proportion to the amount of manual labour required to carry them on. Yet, by this plan, that branch which required more manual labour than any, agriculture, was to have the least protection; while manufactures, on which machinery would be so much brought to bear, was to have the most (hear). This fact, indeed, accounted for the whole measure; for, disguise it as you would, it had resulted from a cry against agricultural protection, followed up with a determination to make the extinction of that protection complete. The Right Hon. Baronet rested its abolition on considerations, he said, partly of justice, and partly of policy. Surely, as regarded the justice of it, the condition of the British agriculturist, as compared with the foreigner, should be considered. He lived in a country where, money being plentiful, and the circulation of it rapid, prices were high. He was exposed to taxation unequal and heavy, and also to those local assessments which in foreign countries were borne by the state. The agriculturist was embarrassed too, more, perhaps, than any other person in the state, with the burden of the stamp laws, the indirect taxation of the Excise and Customs. These considerations made the question of compensation a difficult one; although, indeed, the Right Hon. Baronet wished that his suggestion should not be looked on as compensation, and that the grant should be looked at solely as to whether it was expedient to stimulate, by artificial means, your domestic agriculture. But it was impossible to do away with the effect on the Right Hon. Baronet's supporters of his former arguments in favour of protection (hear). He (Sir W. Heathcote) could not forget that the farmers, who were not fifty years ago, so highly taxed as they were now, by three times, were able to feed double the population. Nor could he forget that when last a scarcity occurred, such as was made one of the pretexts for this measure, England was the only country in Europe really able to meet it, and that at a time when every other country was prepared to close its ports against us. To avert the possibility of such a crisis being renewed, he had voted for the Canada Corn Bill, and he was prepared to have voted for an

Australian Corn Bill also. But now no such principle was retained. For the first time, too, we were avowing ourselves to be against a colonial policy—we were ourselves taking the first step towards severing the connexions with our colonies. With these views on the measure he did not conceive himself able to enter at this stage on the question of compensation; on the contrary, he conceived himself bound to oppose the measure altogether (hear). There was one consideration, however, which might weigh with some on his side of the House—that by voting against the measure they would be compromising the existence of the Ministry. He was not one to under-rate the importance of that difficulty. He was not one of those who might be careless whether the Right Hon. Baronet or the Noble Lord was at the head of affairs. He supported the former because he generally agreed in his course of Government, and it was not because he might differ with him on an important point, that he would be led to transfer his support to those from whose policy he differed in general, and who on this particular subject went further than the Right Hon. Baronet himself (cheers). The Right Hon. Baronet took credit to himself for having accepted office not for personal objects, but to carry out measures which he believed to be patriotic. In the same way, he was bound to concede to his supporters the right to scrutinize those measures, and to ascertain whether they were deserving the votes which he called for. If, on their deciding against those measures, the Right Hon. Baronet were induced to throw up the Government, why, on him, and not on those who generally supported him, would be the responsibility attending such a course (hear, hear). The Hon. Baronet seconded the amendment.

MR. W. LASCELLES said the Hon. Baronet who last spoke seemed to attribute the prosperity of England to the system of protection. He thought differently; for from the time of the commencement of the adoption of the principle might be traced a system of fluctuation, of alternations of prosperity and adversity. Nor did he see why this measure should be made a test of Conservative policy. There was nothing in the reconstruction of the Conservative party, after the Reform Bill, to authorize the supposition that a restrictive commercial policy was to be considered as its fundamental principle. The Right Hon. Baronet had been taunted with the sudden change in his policy and with his inconsistency, but it was impossible to look at the principles of his former relaxations in the protective system and not see that they had embraced the whole principle of Free Trade (hear, hear). They were so understood (hear, hear). In 1842 the Right Hon. Baronet proposed the existing Corn Law; and what was the consequence? In every succeeding session of Parliament questions had been put to him in every tone of alarm,—“After the principles you have expressed, do you mean to alter the Corn Laws, or do you not?” The Right Hon. Baronet’s answers, which were considered unsatisfactory at the time (hear, hear), were to this effect,—“I have no intention to alter the Corn Laws, but no man who is the Minister of this country ought to pledge himself for ever as to what he may do upon such a subject.” They might attempt to bolster the trade of the country by protective duties, but, depend upon it, that at the root of the question we should find our best

policy in free intercourse with foreign countries. From the first opening of the East India Company's charter, and whether they looked at the articles of silk, sugar, or wool, every instance that they could bring to mind of a relaxation of protective duties established the wisdom of that policy. And the fact that Hon. Gentlemen on that (the Ministerial) side of the House would have to refute that night was, that the result of all our experience, without a single exception, confirmed every theory of the wisest men who had studied the subject of political economy. He did not take even agriculture itself as an exception, looking at the state it was in. And, although he could not help fearing that some distress in the agricultural districts might be felt in reverting to a better system, he hoped that would not be great. However, that distress constituted no reason why they should defer any longer reverting to a sounder theory of legislation. Every one who knew the strength and influence of party attachments was aware how painful it must have been to the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government to take the course he had. But, by taking that course, he had done more to promote the true interests of the country than by any policy that could have been adopted.

LORD NORREYS said, that having been a constant supporter of the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) since the year 1830 down to the present time, he regretted that he must now not only oppose the measure, but also withdraw all confidence from the Right Hon. Baronet's Administration. He had not deserted their ranks until he had heard the explanation and the measures. He disapproved of the course taken in condemning the Right Hon. Gentleman without a hearing, and of pledging members to a particular line of conduct, in the absence of information, and should have felt himself degraded in his own eyes, and those of his constituents, if he had submitted to such a request. He therefore thought the only course to be taken was to wait and see what the measures were, and to do the best that could be done for the agriculturists under all the circumstances. But he never could have contemplated the proposal of such measures by the Right Hon. Baronet. He was ready to admit the difficulties of the Right Hon. Baronet's position, that whatever change he had proposed would have met with equal opposition from most of his present opponents; therefore he might have been driven to such an extensive plan. He did not believe that the Right Hon. Baronet had been wanting in political integrity, or that he had been actuated by any dishonest motives; but, contrasting his conduct in former years with the present, it was clear he had been wanting in that foresight which it was necessary a leader should possess to command the confidence of his party. He (Lord Norreys) would resist the measure; and the Right Hon. Baronet, and not those who opposed the measure, must be responsible for any confusion which arose (hear, hear). He had risked this state of things by abandoning the ground on which he had driven his political opponents from office, and behaved unfairly to them and his own supporters, and he, and not those who opposed it, must be responsible for whatever consequences ensued (cheers).

MR. B. COCHRANE said it had been argued that in the Corn Laws

a matter of Christian principle was involved. He could not see any principle at all in the question. If we looked back into the history of the Corn Laws we should find that for five centuries the trade in Corn was free. The system of protection took its date from the Revolution settlement. In 1773 Lord North reduced the price at which protection was enjoyed to 44s. In 1791 it was raised to 54s. In 1805 it was reduced again, and in 1815 there was a total prohibition. In 1822 Mr. Canning's resolutions were thrown out, and in 1828 Mr. Grant brought forward his resolutions. Subsequently we had the bill of 1842, which it was now proposed to overthrow. He could not see any question of principle in all these changes, and if the Corn Laws constituted a political faith, it was a faith that admitted of every diversity of opinion. It was now said that Parliament had no right to interfere with the Corn Laws without appealing to the people; but Mr. Pitt, in 1798, on the question of the legislative union of the two countries, said—"If it becomes a question of the competency of Parliament—if it is said that Parliament has no right to decide this question, you are admitting a principle the most dangerous that can be conceived in a state. It is a doctrine leading to a perversion of all the principles of political society—it is declaring that there exists a sovereignty in abeyance in the people, which must be called forth at every crisis in the country" (hear, hear). He (Mr. Cochrane) could not forget that a Parliament elected for three years had passed the Septennial Act—that in a Parliament elected to oppose Catholic Emancipation, the Catholic Emancipation Act had passed by a majority of 178. It was difficult to define the limits of Parliamentary competency to decide upon public questions, but Parliament would become an assembly of delegates only if the opinions now so prevalent were admitted. Parliament was a deliberate and legislative assembly, in which Hon. Members were considered to vote and act from the force of argument and reason; and there could be no more dangerous opinion, nor one more derogatory to the dignity of Parliament, than that no Member was at liberty to alter his former opinions without throwing up his seat and referring himself to his constituents. The Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had been charged with great inconsistency, but he (Mr. Cochrane) did not see that others had been more consistent ("oh, oh!"). Hon. Gentlemen had quoted *Hansard* against the Right Hon. Baronet, but *Hansard* was an arsenal in which every army might find its weapons. Mr. Canning, in bringing before the House his resolutions in 1827, had the candour to say that had he been in the House in 1815, under the then circumstances of the country, he should very probably have supported that measure, although it was so different from his. Lord Ashburton, the great advocate of protection now, in 1820 presented the petition of the merchants and traders of London, praying for the repeal of all protective duties (hear). *Facies non omnibus una*. He could not see therefore, that the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had been worse than others, and were we to argue, therefore, that all public men were dishonest? That would be an unfair assumption. The truth was, the Corn Laws were a difficult question, and one that

must necessarily be regulated by particular times and circumstances (cheers). There was a good deal of truth in a dictum of the late Mr. Sydney Smith, that "the Minister who proposed an unalterable law was an unalterable fool" (great laughter). This was a question of public policy, and not one capable of mathematical reasoning and demonstration; nor was any principle involved in it of eternal justice or constitutional theory. If the Right Honourable Baronet had given way in consequence only of the agitation that had been carried on in the country, he (Mr. Cochrane), for one, should not have supported him; or if he had sacrificed his convictions, and talked only of concession, he should not have supported him, or voted for him under protest. But the Right Hon. Gentleman had not said anything of the kind; he stated that his opinions had undergone a total change, and that he founded his present measures on the experience of his past success. If there were any person unbiassed by party feelings, and unshackled by prejudices, he (Mr. Cochrane) would show him how the commercial prosperity of this country extended, and tell him at the same time that all its great wealth had grown up under free institutions, which every nation had envied, but none successfully imitated; he would tell him also that it had grown up principally under Tory Ministers, all in favour of the relaxation of commercial restrictions (hear). Such were Lord North, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Huskisson, and Mr. Canning. When Mr. Pitt introduced his commercial treaty with France in 1787, he spoke exactly in the language the Right Hon. Baronet might have made use of; he said that by carrying out those principles he should add to the wealth, the morality, and the general happiness of the country; and if the same statesman now told them that carrying out the same principles would lead them to results still greater, to still increased prosperity, should he (Mr. Cochrane) be accused of a too easy credibility and an overwrought imagination, if he felt and believed that there was a kindred spirit between free commerce and the institutions of a free country? In 1842, when the present law was brought forward by the Right Hon. Gentleman, what he (Mr. Cochrane) said was this, that anything was better for the agricultural interest than a state of uncertainty; since the measure passed, had there been any confidence in its duration? Farmers differed as to whether the Corn Laws should be repealed in five years or ten, but they all agreed that they would be repealed ultimately. He should support this measure because he had confidence in the financial policy of the Right Hon. Baronet; he should support it for the same reason which led the Hon. Member for Newcastle (Mr. Colquhoun) to oppose it. He supported the measure because he preferred legislation to agitation, and because he advocated the cause of protection (hear, hear); not of protection to one class, or one interest, but of protection to all classes and all interests,—because he wished for protection against the dangers of those hours of darkness and trouble, which he trusted in God were far from them, but which he could not conceal from himself might depend on the life of one man in France, and on the popular cry of a moment; because he wished for protection against those who might threaten the greatness of the colonial empire, and because he thought that

protection would be best found in a generous course of legislation. He voted for the measure because, in the language of the beautiful prayer which they daily read, he wished to cast aside all partial affections,<sup>4</sup> private interests, and prejudices, and humbly to do all he could for the settlement of this question proposed by those whose peculiar province it was to sway the destinies of this great country ; and because he wished to add his mite towards the welfare of the poorer, but not less loyal, classes of his fellow subjects.

MR. W. DEEREN assured the House that he addressed it only from an imperative sense of duty, and having claimed that indulgence it always extended to those who addressed it for the first time, he said, he had refrained from expressing his opinions on the night the Right Hon. Baronet introduced his plan, because it seemed a general understanding that the merits of the question should not then be entered into, and because he wished to remove from himself the imputation of having formed a hasty judgment on this great and important matter. He was glad he had so abstained from expressing his sentiments, because he had since then met, in his own county, a very large body of his constituents. The subject was one of the highest importance; it involved nothing less than this—whether they should wipe from the statute-book those legislative enactments for the protection of native industry which the wisdom of their forefathers had placed there, and which had been continued by the united wisdom of men of different political opinions ; but who were all alike anxious for the welfare of this great country. Under those laws this country had arrived at its present eminence in the scale of nations, and it was for those who guided its counsels at the present time to prove that the laws which had always been treated as wise, prudent, and safe, were exactly the reverse, and ought to be expunged from the statute-book, and that they ought to legislate in such a manner as to do everything to open the door for the foreigner to compete with them in their own markets. From the extensive change they were now called on to make, no one would believe that the present laws were proposed and received the deliberate sanction of Parliament only in 1842, when the principle of protection was avowed and acknowledged. Yet in 1846 they were called on to abolish them. That measure had exceeded the most sanguine expectations formed of it ; under its operation the producer of corn had not made more than a fair profit, and the consumer had not been charged an extravagant price for that article. The Right Hon. Baronet had instanced the thriving condition of the country during the last three years ; but during the whole of that time they had been under the operation of that very law of 1842 ; yet in the next sentence the Right Hon. Baronet called on them to abolish that law ! Anxious as he might be to support the Government on general questions, he could not do so contrary to the best judgment he was able to form (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet hoped that their manufactures would be taken in exchange for corn ; but at the present moment, this was not the case. Was not this measure then an experiment tried on the native industry of the country ? He feared the effect of it would be to render this country dependent on foreign nations for the supply of the first necessary of life,

and he contended, that, as they had done at present, other countries in cases of emergency would prohibit exportation. They had then to take into consideration the effect which such a revision in the Corn Laws would have upon those for whom, and in reference to whose interests, likewise national interests, those laws had been originally designed ; and as to the justice of the interference at present contemplated, there could be, in impartial minds, but one opinion. The Honourable Gentleman then read a portion of a letter on this subject which he had received, and which, he represented, set the question in a very clear light :—“ The argument for free trade in corn will be urged on the ground that, whatever necessity there may be, for purposes of revenue, to continue duties on less important commodities, articles of subsistence are the last that should be taxed. —Granted. Give the cultivator fair play. Exempt him from taxation, and he will readily meet the world in his own field of industry. The bounty of Providence, the principle of fertility, will always insure an ample profit to his industry and skill. But the question before the country is not whether articles of subsistence ought to be taxed. They are taxed, and that to an enormous amount. The question is, whether this taxation shall bear entirely on the producer, or whether it shall be partly distributed among the consumers, by the operation of the present system of Corn Law? The price of every other article comprises not only the cost of production, and a profit on that cost, but also whatever tax or duty may have been imposed on it by the state. Why should the produce of land be an exception to this rule? The answer will be that, so long as the producer obtains a price sufficient to give him a profit, he is not prejudiced by the alleged taxation—he may fairly bear it ; and the weight cannot justly be transferred to the consumer ; especially with respect to an article which is the first necessary of life, and the price of which so materially affects the poorest classes. Land, however highly taxed, yields this profit, as is proved by the existence of a further surplus, namely, rent. A Corn Law, therefore, makes the consumer pay the landlord’s rent ; and the whole question is a landlord’s question, and nothing else. Rejoinder :—Rent is not a direct object in this question ; it is incidental to it, and nothing beyond that. The relation of landlord and tenant is that of joint capitalists in the production of corn, &c. The occupier finds moveable capital, labour, seed, horses, implements ; the owner finds fixed capital, dwelling-house, barns, stables, dairies, granaries, cart and waggon sheds, cattle lodges, piggeries, fences, gates, &c. On the poorest soils which pay for cultivation, the landlord receives little, if anything, more than his proportion of profit on his fixed capital, deducting land-tax, quit-rents, &c. Are these less fertile soils to be cultivated? Can the nation afford to lose them? That is the question. If they are to be retained by adequate prices, then those prices will give an increased profit to lands of superior quality, through all the degrees, from the lowest to the highest. House-rent is an incident to the great and main question, whether the vast breadth of inferior and highly taxed soils is to be abandoned, under the discouragement of inadequate price, occasioned by foreign competition of comparatively untaxed corn raised on superior soils abroad at a far less cost.”

The Honourable Gentleman concluded by thanking the House for the attention with which it had listened to this, his first address to it ; and by the expression of a hope that Divine Providence, which had hitherto so exalted the nation, would continue to guide its destiny, making it an example of good government at home, and teaching to it moderation and justice in its dealings with foreign countries.

SIR J. WALSH thought that those gentlemen who were representatives of the interests of agricultural districts had every motive for now addressing the House, and he was also of opinion that they had a fair claim upon the attention of the House. It would be allowed that they were the representatives of great interests, and the organs of opinions which, if they had lost weight upon the mind of the Right Hon. Baronet, were still the opinions of a large and influential portion of the community ; and they were further entitled to a hearing on the present occasion, because, in some degree, they appeared to defend themselves from charges and imputations of a most personal character, and recklessly and unjustifiably levelled against them in every corner of the kingdom. Hon. Gentlemen who had hitherto in the course of the discussion preserved a studious and stubborn silence, had held up the landed proprietors to the gaze of the country as, to use their very language, the weak and ignorant advocates of an odious and selfish policy. In answering assertions like these, they presented themselves under circumstances of great disadvantage, deprived, as they had been, by the sudden change in the opinions of the Right Hon. Baronet, of that powerful advocacy of their cause on which, on former occasions, they were accustomed to rely. Although, however, in introducing the present measure, the Right Hon. Baronet had accompanied it with what he termed compensation, he had not taken into account what might, in the end, prove of great value to the cause of the agriculturists, the result of leaving them to fight their own battles and defend their own characters (hear, hear). In the first place, distinctly and emphatically they had to deny that the question was a question of rent, and rent only ; but even if they were to argue it upon that narrow basis, and assume that rent alone should be considered, it would be proved that it was a question of the very greatest importance, not solely to those receiving the rent, but to the country at large. From a return moved for by the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers), it was found, that in the year 1842, there had been assessed to the income tax, as rent, £45,750,000, and this was for Great Britain alone ; and when they added the probable rental of Ireland, which they might fairly estimate at from £15,000,000 to £20,000,000 more, it would be acknowledged that interests in which such a sum as £60,000,000 was involved, were of an importance to demand respect and consideration. Mr. M'Culloch, an eminent authority, estimated the number of landed proprietors in Great Britain at 200,000, a number exclusive of families and dependents, and on that ground it would be improper to look upon the question as one of a mere class interest. But this was arguing the matter as one of rent, viewing it in that sense to which Hon. Gentlemen opposite wished it to be restricted, and to which they (the agriculturists) refused to confine it. It involved the fortunes and the prosperity of

the tenant-farmer and of the agricultural labourer. The Right Hon. Baronet who had introduced the measure now before the House supported it on the ground that the impulse which the relaxation of protective duties would give to the trade of the country, the greater facilities which the farmer would then have for purchasing the various articles necessary to his occupation, and the greater cheapness of all commodities in general use, would prove an equivalent to the loss which those engaged in agriculture would sustain from the withdrawal of protection. That was the argument of the Right Hon. Baronet, and he (Sir J. Walsh) only wished he were as well satisfied of its correctness as of the sincerity with which the Right Hon. Baronet made his statement. He contended that the profits of the farmer would not be diminished; but it was plain and palpable that, once exposed to foreign competition, all their profits would be beaten down, and that all the chances of success which hitherto they had enjoyed would be effectually and irremediably removed. It was possible that either of these opinions might be the correct one; but what was utterly impossible and absurd, according to the most known doctrines of political economy, and the simplest dictates of common sense, was that, in the event of the measure submitted being carried, the landed proprietor alone would suffer, and that the farmer and the agricultural labourer would not be equally injured. The farmers knew well the bearings of the question, and the nature of the drawbacks upon the prosperity of their particular occupation. They knew well that they had to contend with the diversity of the seasons,—changes which Providence had ordained, and against which no legislature could guard; that they were, at all times exposed to the changes in the circulating medium, and the alternations of progress and decay in the manufacturing and commercial districts, which alternations were a condition of commerce and manufacture that no human wisdom could foresee or prepare for; and, knowing all that, acquainted with the many and various circumstances affecting the profits on his industry and skill, the farmer asked—and had a right to demand—that he should be protected from the additional cause of fluctuation in his trade which would result from a compulsion to enter into competition with the foreigner (hear). There was another very grave and important consideration for the House in dealing with this question. What were the evils which they were called upon to remedy? What was the state of things in this country which required the application of an experiment which had, in some degree, at least, been admitted to be hazardous? The Right Hon. Baronet had appealed to the experience, the short, limited, and as he (Sir J. Walsh) thought, inconclusive experience of the last three years. He thought he might be permitted, in viewing this question, to a wider scope, and direct their views to the result of protection during the last thirty years. Although the Corn Laws had been subjected to several changes and modifications, the principle on the whole had been that of a high, valid protection (hear, hear). What had been accomplished under that system of protection? The population of the country from 1815 to 1845 had increased from about 13,000,000, to somewhat over 19,000,000; he thought that about 6,000,000 had been added to the population of the coun-

try. What had been the history of its commerce and manufactures during that period? The Hon. Gentleman opposite told them that the Corn Law restricted commerce and prevented its expanding, and that, owing to the Corn Law, our trade and commerce had not reached their natural dimensions; but if they looked at the facts, they would find that there was no country in the world, at any period of the world, in which commerce and manufactures had developed themselves with such extraordinary rapidity as ours had done during the last thirty years (hear, hear). Whether they looked to our cotton manufactures, to our woollen manufactures, or to our iron manufactures, there might be a different rate of progress in each, but there had been an immense advance in all; and in the face of all this, and in addition to all this, they found that this great additional population had been supplied with grain from their own country. It was impossible to deny this great result, and that it spoke strongly in favour of a system which had produced a state of prosperity and of progressive advance which was unparalleled in the annals of the world (hear, hear). But it was argued that, as they made this progress, and were about to add 6,000,000 more to our population, we could not meet the additional consumption, as we could not grow more quarters of wheat. So far from this being the case, there never was a period in which the agriculture of this country was more ready to take a great stride in advance; there never was a period in which more capital was seeking employment in land than at this period, if proper security were afforded, and various information as to agricultural improvement had been circulated by the Royal Agricultural Society in the most distant parts of the country. He believed that the science of the cultivation of the soil was in its infancy. The Noble Lord the Member for South Lancashire (Lord Egerton), on moving the Address to her Majesty made the remark that agriculture was itself a manufacture of produce. Let it then, be compared with other branches of our trade and manufactures, and it would be found that agriculture suffered many heavy burdens from which trade and manufactures were exempt (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet had considered the state of Ireland, the proximate cause of the sudden resolution he had come to regarding the Corn Laws was the state of Ireland; and he (Sir John Walsh) should not be disposed to treat that subject with anything approaching to levity. He was too well acquainted and too intimately connected with that country not to feel apprehensions from the failure of the potato crop in Ireland, and he admitted that there was no practicable measure which ought not to be adopted to alleviate or guard against so serious a calamity (hear, hear). But he did not understand why a calamity which, though pressing, must be temporary, should be the ground for such a measure as this (hear, hear). He did not consider that the present state of Ireland afforded a justification for the present alteration of the Corn Laws; on the contrary, the general state of Ireland furnished a strong argument for the maintenance of the existing system (hear, hear). Any argument in favour of the Corn Laws applied in the strongest degree to Ireland. Ireland was peculiarly an agricultural country (hear, hear); its vast population, denser in proportion to

square miles than the population of this country, was almost entirely dependent upon agriculture. The trade in agricultural produce between England and Ireland was one of the strongest links and bonds of the union (hear, hear). There were two links and bonds of the union; one bond was the trade in agricultural produce; the other the Protestant Church in Ireland. If you destroy one, take care you do not lose the other (hear, hear). He could not sit down without adverting to another subject. The Right Hon. Baronet had based the adoption of his measure upon the experience of the last three years. He (Sir J. Walsh) thought there was another cause which had had a most powerful effect in forwarding this measure; he thought that to the organization of the Anti-Corn Law League, and to the funds raised by that body, to which the public had been induced to subscribe so largely, was to be mainly attributed the resolution which the House was called upon to adopt. During the last 25 years, this was the second association which had produced an important effect upon the policy and the legislation of this country. Read the history of the first and solve this problem: how long will it be before the next association shall crush the independence of Parliament? (hear). This was an evil which some day or other, by some Minister or other, must be grappled with. It was a state of things which could not long co-exist with any system of regular policy or orderly government; it must in the end be wholly destructive of the independence and utility of representative government. It appeared to him to be a most dangerous experiment upon the resources of the country; and it appeared to him to be doubly dangerous when he remembered that it was to be mainly brought about by the influence of that association, the mere existence of which was utterly opposed to the feelings and opinions of every lover of order and good government, and which all men entertaining those opinions were bound to oppose. He should oppose the measures of the Right Hon. Baronet, not on the ground of their probable influence upon rent only, but because of the danger which might arise from mistakes in the calculations of her Majesty's Government. If those calculations proved to be in any degree erroneous, such a mistake would involve the interests not merely of a class, but might destroy the prosperity of an empire (hear).

MR. A. B. HOPE said he doubted whether the present House of Commons could consider that they were legally cognizant of the present question ("hear, hear," and laughter). They were elected in the year 1841, when the Right Honourable Member for Tamworth was at the head of her Majesty's Opposition. There was then a struggle made, and afterwards continued, against the free trade doctrines, and the Right Honourable Baronet led them in that struggle. The Noble Lord the Member for London declared in favour of free trade—it was the last effort of the Whig Government; an Administration which had become effete in the natural course of events. In the latter days of the last Parliament the Right Honourable Baronet opposed free trade, and compelled the Noble Lord to appeal to the country; that appeal was made, the present House of Commons was returned as a protectionist Parlia-

ment, and the Right Honourable Baronet was chosen as the leader of the protectionist party; yet now, in the year 1846, the same Right Honourable Baronet came forward and called upon them to adopt a measure far stronger and more sweeping than any that even the Noble Lord had ever proposed. He would ask were they prepared to change that which had been the policy of England for centuries? Ought the House of Commons in its fifth Session to send such a bill to the Upper House? Would they call upon the Lord Chancellor to move such a bill from the woolsack—that ancient emblem of protection to British industry—the seat long a memento of that which had been the glory and the pride of the Parliament of England, but which was now to yield up its honours to what was called “true Conservative policy?” This was a strange course for the Right Honourable Baronet to recommend, and one evidently contemptuous towards the party which had hitherto supported him. The Right Honourable Baronet might have told them, as he had done upon former occasions, that three courses were open to him (a laugh), he might have dissolved the Parliament, or preferred the more objectionable course which he had adopted, or he might have handed the Government over to the Noble Lord opposite, and tendered him a frank and cordial support (hear, hear). That would have been an heroic attempt to promote the well-being of the country that would have won the Right Honourable Baronet golden opinions from his supporters (hear, hear). The present head of the Government ought not to have appropriated to himself a Whig measure; he surely ought not to have taken to himself the credit of their policy—the Government should, instead of that, have been offered to the Noble Lord (“hear, hear,” from Sir Robert Peel). Whether events might prove the new measures to be wise and expedient, it was impossible to say; but be they right or be they wrong, he should vote with the Hon. Member for Bristol.

LORD SANDON said he should say nothing to those who on that side declared their intention to support a measure of which they disapproved; however, in the present day the side of the House on which a Member sat, did by no means indicate the opinions which he entertained. In saying thus much, he was bound also to say, that the arguments adduced by the Right Hon. Baronet did by no means carry conviction to his mind; the experience of three years did not supply a sufficient indication of facts to warrant them in coming to such a conclusion as that to which the Right Hon. Baronet sought to lead them in his attempt to overturn a system which had been so long established. They had been told that labour and food did not in their prices reciprocally act upon each other; but for the purpose of giving the negative to that assertion, he should desire any one to compare with the prices of food the wages of hand-loom weavers and of agricultural labourers, at any time and under almost any circumstances which they might think proper to select; and he hoped that they would at the same time compare wages on the continent and in England, when they would not fail to observe the marked difference which subsisted between them. He feared that the effect of the proposed measure would be to render the sphere of competition larger and larger every day, and he saw

no ground in the experience of three years of peculiar and artificial circumstances to justify the policy which they were about to pursue. If they looked at France, America, Holland, and Belgium, they would see that no country had yet dared to leave agriculture without protection. They should recollect, also, that if there were an abundance of food in other countries, there would probably be an abundant crop here also, and then there must be a glut. He hoped, also, that the condition of the farmer would not be forgotten; he could not change his residence, or transfer his capital, or enlarge or curtail his operations; he was, as it were, tied to a stake. He said, therefore, that the condition of the farmer was peculiarly helpless and exposed, and that it required their more particular attention (hear). He thought it no mean consideration that they should make so large a change, and expect that £40,000,000 should be diverted from one channel and run in another direction; but though he felt this less than some Honourable Members, and though he believed the landlords would but suffer some inconvenience, he must look especially to the farmers and the labourers, for not only would the farmers suffer, but the whole body of labourers. The farmers in the first part of the struggle would employ fewer hands, they would work harder themselves, they would give more employment to their children, but in the result the land would be worse and worse cultivated, and in the end the farmers would bring on their own ruin, whilst the labourers under them would be standing idle and enduring great suffering. These reasons did lead him to consider well before he consented to make this great change, and to doubt whether the conclusions which had become almost a matter of faith, and insisted upon by Hon. Members who were then sitting below him, could be eradicated from his mind by the experience of the last few years (hear, hear); and whether, if they analyzed each result one by one, they would not find a special reason for it. Having said so much, it would be expected that he should explain why he came to his present conclusions (hear, hear). He found that the country must be governed. He felt this, that upon a question of this nature, unless it was supported by the great mass of enlightened opinion, there was no chance of its maintaining its ground in such a country as this. He found that when opinions hostile to protection had been pronounced by the great leaders on both sides of the House, and that it was now opposed by all the gentlemen who had ever sat in the Government except two, it was no longer a matter for discussion; but the only question was the way of doing it. He looked upon it, as the French said, as *un fait accompli*,—it was settled. It might be railed against, but the country must be governed, and when the only persons who could govern the country were of one opinion, the sooner it was settled the better it would be for all parties (hear, hear). Let Hon. Gentlemen around him struggle and resist, there might be months, or a year of embitterment, during which they might unsettle every branch of trade, and they might even agriculture itself; but they must come to the same result. He saw, therefore, that it was only a question of time. He believed, also, though he had spoken of the peril of the experiment, that he did not feel all the apprehensions entertained by some of his Hon. Friends; if

he entertained them to the same extent with them, he should be prepared to act with them; but though they were taking a dangerous step, for which there was no precedent, and though it did not simply involve the question of protection to a few landlords, he did not think it would produce all the evils ascribed to it; he did not think that millions of acres would be thrown out of cultivation, or that millions of labourers would be thrown out of employment. He looked at the simple fact, that he had seen the price of wheat fall from 135s. to 55s., and at the same time he had seen that the land had not gone out of cultivation, nay, that at this moment there was more labour employed on the land (hear, hear, hear). Although there might be great evils, and although we might be exposed to fluctuations from which we had been hitherto exempt, he would not, therefore, come to the conclusion that the land would be thrown out of cultivation, or that labour would remain unemployed. He could not but see that so far from land being unused, many acres of land had been enclosed, and, notwithstanding much individual misery, he believed that the state of England would be still safe, and that she would ride over the breakers. He saw in this act, indeed, a hazardous experiment; at the same time, not sharing to their full extent in the apprehensions felt by others, and not seeing how, in the result, they must not ultimately come to what was now proposed, he felt bound to give it his support. The Corn Laws were not a question of religion, of faith, or of morals, and he must pursue that course which he believed to be most consistent with the real interests of the country (hear, hear).

LORD J. RUSSELL—I believe, Sir, that I am the first member who has risen on this side of the House (cheers) on the important—the very important—question now before us; and, while I shall give my vote on the same side with the Noble Lord who has just addressed the House, I can say that I shall do it with better heart and hope than that Noble Lord (cheers) as to the task we are about to undertake. I will not attempt to underrate the importance of this question. Honourable Gentlemen whom we have heard speak on the opposite side of the House, and who object to the propositions made to us by her Majesty's Ministers, seem to consider that they have said what is quite conclusive when they say that for centuries a system of protection has been the system of legislation adopted in our public policy (hear). I am not at all terrified, Sir, by that denunciation. We know that for centuries the system of religious disabilities was the system of legislation adopted in this country; we know that for centuries the want of security for the liberty of the person was the legislative system adopted in this country; but happily we live to acknowledge the great benefits which have flowed from the destruction of those systems (hear, hear); and I hope that we are now at the commencement of the destruction of another system which has been most injurious to the country, and that we shall hereafter feel proud that we have participated in laying the foundation for a new and a better order of things (cheers). It appears, Sir, that the question with respect to the Corn Laws, which in former years was almost exclusively confined to the particular question of Corn, has of late—especially in meetings and

discussions in the country, been widened to the whole principle of artificial protection; and those who defend the present Corn Laws, and who wish to maintain them—avoiding all appearance of selfishness or of legislation for a particular class, have said that they wish all native industry to be protected (cheers from the Ministerial benches); but the Honourable Gentleman who seconded the amendment this night seemed to confess, at least he was sensible that protection to all native industry was a mere plausible word, that it rested on no solid foundation, because he asked, how could protection be found for many great interests in the country? The great cotton manufactures of this country, the great woollen manufactures, the great linen manufactures of this country are sent abroad to compete in markets at a great distance from us; they are sent to the markets of America and Asia to compete with the fabrics of other countries; we therefore want no protection for them in Sussex or in Lincolnshire (hear, hear). If that be the case, and if the great branches of our industry want no protection, they are not benefited by the trifling and the trumpery protection which remains on your statute-book, and they are not benefited by that protection which seems to give to one particular class of industry an advantage. The great general argument of all writers on political economy with regard to protection applies to each particular class. In the first place it interferes with the due current of trade on behalf of one particular class; in the next place, it lays a tax upon the rest of the community for the benefit of that particular class; and in the third place, that this particular object is not attained, and that the very classes it seeks to benefit lose by this pretended protection. Indeed, these propositions have now been so clearly proved, that they have become axioms in political science (cheers). I was induced the other day, in consequence of the praise bestowed upon it by the Hon. Member for Norfolk, to read a pamphlet, in answer to another pamphlet published by Messrs. Malton and Trimmer, written by Mr. Halesworth, who says that every quarter of corn is raised 17s. in price by the protection afforded by the Corn Laws. If this be so,—though I believe it in fact to be a great exaggeration,—if corn and bread be thus raised in price, an enormous amount of protection is given to agriculture. Suppose the fact were so, if 20,000,000 quarters were raised 17s. a quarter, a tax of no less than £17,000,000 a year would be paid by the people of this country for this protection to agriculture. I believe that this statement is most exaggerated, but still the principle is correct; it does raise the price, and while we give protection, as it is afforded by the present law, we give, what I will not call an advantage, but an apparent advantage, to a particular class, which is injurious to the other classes. The Hon. Gentleman the Member for Hampshire, who seconded the amendment in terms which were so temperate and so unobjectionable (cheers), stated that a difference ought to be made between those in whose occupations more manual labour is employed and those in whose occupations there is less manual labour and in which machinery is more employed. Now, I do not see the foundation for any such distinction. Suppose 5,000,000 are employed in a trade in which machinery is used, and others are employed in a trade where there is little

machinery, that is not a good ground why one should receive the protection of the Legislature, and why the other should not enjoy that protection. Well, then, Sir, if it be the case that the system of protection be in itself an evil, as the great writers have laid it down, the question comes to be, "What course ought we to take to get rid of this protection?" And here I must say, that the writers who have written most ably on this subject—I refer to Adam Smith and to Ricardo, and to Lord Grenville and Mr. Huskisson as statesmen—have not pointed out in what way we are to get rid of this protection, how we are to eradicate this vice. On this subject they have thrown little light, possibly because there was little which a theoretical writer could throw upon it. I confess that I agree with the Noble Lord who last spoke, that a great transition cannot be made without incurring the risk at least of considerable suffering (cheers from the Ministerial side). Circumstances may be so prosperous that we may avoid it, but I do not wish to risk the prediction that if we get rid of protection, though we promote eventually the welfare of the country, we shall not for a time incur a considerable sacrifice. I think that this admission has been made by all who have thought upon the subject. Some may speak of a panic, others, as landlords, of the difficulties of making arrangements as far as different classes are concerned; but all will admit that there is a material, a considerable danger, of some loss of capital and of some diminution of profits. I come then to the mode in which the Right Honourable Gentleman opposite, the first Minister of the Crown, proposed to treat this question. I agree with the Noble Lord that I do not think he has laid his grounds broadly and extensively enough in point of time (cheers). It appears to me that there are measures to which he might have alluded. He could have had no difficulty in referring to them, because I believe he was a Member of the Cabinet by which those measures were introduced. I allude to the measures of Mr. Huskisson, which in many cases substituted a moderate duty, and did away generally with prohibitory duties. I will not make any statement of figures, but I will say, generally, that I think the duty on silk having been made a moderate duty from prohibition in 1825 or 1826, in 1837 and 1838 we found the import of raw silk had increased more than 100 per cent.; with respect to French gloves, with regard to which there was a great alarm, the increase in the article of hides and skins necessary to make gloves, was 57 per cent. in the course of about ten years after those duties were reduced; with regard to wool, the reduction to 1*d.* a pound produced a great increase in the price of the article, an article the produce of the British agriculturist; the French wool being introduced at that low duty, the exports increased to a very great extent, and I think the tod of wool rose from 25*s.* to nearly 40*s.* These are instances among many that may be quoted from the history of the last and the present centuries, showing the benefit of at least reducing duties (hear, hear). But, then, the Right Hon. Gentleman has proposed a plan which goes beyond the mere reduction of duties to a moderate amount, thereby increasing the import; he has proposed, with regard to the duties on Corn, that after three years they shall altogether cease. Now, I am of opinion, that if the Right Hon.

Gentleman had undertaken this task in 1842 in a different spirit, and had made a far greater reduction in the duties on Corn than he then made, it would have been better for the agriculturists as a body, and better for the country in general; but, as matters stand now, I am ready to say, seeing the contest that is going on—seeing the struggle that would go on if you attempted any intermediate step either of a sliding scale over a few shillings, or a small fixed duty, I am prepared to say, as indeed I have already said in public, that I think the abolition of the duty is the most expedient course for a Government to propose to Parliament (cheers). Considering the plan of the Right Hon. Gentleman as a great measure, as a measure that is to lay the foundation of a completely new principle with regard to our commercial legislation, that principle being neither to foster one trade nor the other, neither to attempt to promote agriculture nor manufactures, but to leave them “to flourish or to fade” according to the energies and skill of the people of this country, and believing that is the sound principle, I am prepared to give every support I can to the plan brought forward by the Right Hon. Gentleman (cheers). But, Sir, I think it incumbent upon me to say, with regard to the mode in which he has introduced it, that of having a new system of Corn Duties for three years, that the opinion I had formed in December, has been more and more strengthened by everything I have heard since the Right Hon. Gentleman made his plan public in this House (hear, hear). I hear from all parts, from Devonshire, from Roxburghshire, from various parts of Scotland, and from various of the midland counties of England, that the farmers who have been consulted upon this subject say—“If we are to have the system of Free Trade instead of the system of Protection, let us know at once what that system is to be (hear, hear). We would rather have the duties immediately repealed, than take the chance of this new Corn Law which you propose, as breaking our fall, and as intended for our benefit” (hear, hear). Sir, I think there is great reason in that. In the first place, I think the tenant-farmer will be better able to arrange with his landlord as to the particular sums that he will have to pay, if he knows at once what the state of the law is, and has not to wait till February, 1849, to take the chance of what may then happen. In the next place, I think there is some danger to the farmer—but it is according, of course, to what the seasons may be—that in 1848, if the price is low, there may be a very considerable accumulation of corn, and that a glut which would not happen if trade were then free, may happen if there is a sudden reduction from 10s. to 1s. in the beginning of 1849, not owing to the price of corn, but owing to your previous legislation. In the next place, I have always thought, that if there be a danger of competition to the English farmer, the danger will be far greater after the lapse of two or three years than it is at the present moment (hear, hear). It so happens that in the present year, we know, owing to the bad harvest in some of the countries of Europe, there is very little stock of corn remaining at Dantzic or Hamburgh, or those parts of the continent from which corn is usually introduced, and there is no reason to suppose that there is any great stock in the United States; there

is, therefore, no apprehension on the part of the farmer. I think the way in which the immediate prospect of the duty being reduced to 4s. has been encountered in the market,—for, I believe the price of corn has generally rather risen than otherwise, is a proof that there is no great danger at the present moment (hear, hear). If there be any danger to encounter, it is when, both on the continent of Europe and in the United States, preparations are made, the ground has been cultivated, and the seed has been sown, with a view to send in large supplies to the English market, and then at that very moment the duty is to cease (hear, hear). It is as if the Right Hon. Gentleman were to furnish the farmer with a great coat, provided he wore it only in the summer, and were to make it a condition that he should take it off when Christmas arrived (“hear,” and a laugh). The provision I think may expose the agricultural interest of this country to a danger which it would not otherwise encounter. But I would put it to the Right Hon. Baronet whether he will not reconsider that part of his plan? (loud cheers). The Right Hon. Gentleman has frequently alleged, when bringing forward subjects of this importance, that it was almost impossible to know the exact effect of the duties proposed, until they had been by himself stated in this House, and the opinions of those who would be most affected by them taken and collected. It does appear to me, as far as I have heard, that with respect to this, which the Right Hon. Baronet intended, no doubt, as an advantage to the cultivator of the soil, the general opinion is that it would not be that advantage (loud cries of “hear, hear”). I hope, therefore, that the Right Hon. Gentleman will reconsider this part of his plan. But, as I have already said, I wish the plan of the Right Hon. Gentleman to succeed; I wish to see his measure with respect to corn successful in this and the other House of Parliament, and no vote of mine shall tend in the least to endanger a measure of such a character (cheers). If, therefore, when we come into committee, the Right Hon. Gentleman tells me that he has considered the representations made from various parts of the country, but that upon the whole he considers the delay of three years, and the duty to be imposed in the meantime, an essential part of his plan, I for my part shall go out with the Right Hon. Gentleman upon it (loud cheers). I have stated thus much with regard to the plan as it affects corn; it is not necessary that I should say much with regard to other parts of the plan which the Right Hon. Gentleman explained to the House. With regard to sugar, it will not be necessary for me at this time to make any observation whatever. With regard to manufactures, I should say, generally, that if the corn duties are to be abolished, the taking away protection from manufactures, unless where there is an impost which gives a considerable revenue, is a clear duty to the agricultural body (loud cries of “hear, hear”). I think you are bound to show them that you abandon protection altogether as a principle, as a principle vicious in itself, and injurious to the country, and not that you are about to subject them to any peculiar experiment, which is so hazardous that you will not subject other parties to the same experiment (hear, hear). I own I doubt if in some other instances, the Right Hon. Gentleman has acted upon that

principle ; but, however, that will be matter of detail when we come to consider the various duties (hear, hear). But there is another part of the subject which I certainly cannot approach with any great satisfaction, from the difficulty of treating it. The Right Hon. Gentleman has proposed to give certain relief with respect to local burdens, and especially with respect to the expense of prisons and of prosecutions. I think those amendments in the law and upon their own grounds just ; I think they are improvements in the existing law ; I did not hear the Right Hon. Gentleman say that they were offered as compensation, and I do not think any compensation of that kind could properly be offered (hear). But I confess I do not feel sure, that with respect to the general burdens of the country, the landed interest, the owners and the occupiers of land, may not have more than the share that properly belongs to them (hear). It is a point upon which I feel difficulty. But there is another difficulty in this question. When, about a year and a half or two years ago, there was a very large surplus of about £3,500,000 in the Exchequer (or indeed more, for there were increased estimates afterwards), I suggested that it might be worth the while of the agricultural interest, if they could at all perceive what was coming on, to have their case as to burdens investigated, with a view to obtaining relief with regard to some taxes,—I mentioned the malt-tax, for instance, which I thought pressed heavily upon them ; but they would not hear of such a proposition ; they said, “ Protection must be kept just as it is ” (hear, hear). When the Right Hon. Baronet came to distribute those £3,500,000, he distributed them no doubt advantageously to many interests of the country, very advantageously to the trade of the country, but with no peculiar regard to the agricultural interest (hear, hear) ; and I for one felt no sympathy for them. I could not vote that they ought to have even the £250,000 which the Hon. Member for Somersetshire proposed they should have granted to them, because I thought as long as they clung to this protection, and insisted upon having what I considered an unfair advantage against their fellow-countrymen, they had no claim for having a peculiar relaxation of burdens. But, as the Right Hon. Baronet now proposes the matter, he really would have little more surplus to give. I do not know that he has fairly so much as the £500,000 or £600,000, which he proposes. I confess freely that if I had had to propose a scheme upon the subject, it might have differed from the right Hon. Baronet’s scheme, but that there would not have been any more very material relief (“ hear, hear,” and a laugh). For the Right Hon. Baronet has this alternative,—to take what there is of surplus in the Exchequer, to endeavour to lay burdens more equally which are now unequal, or to propose an increase of taxation for the purpose of taking off burdens which press more severely on the landed interest. Now, that increase of taxation, I think, would be a most inexpedient course ; I believe it would expose the landed interest to very great unpopularity ; I believe nothing they could gain in point of money would be equal to the odium which would attach to them, if it was to be said that the taxes of the country were to be increased in order to provide a compensation for the abolition of the Corn Laws (hear,

hear). For these reasons, therefore, I say at once that I concur in the general scheme of the Right Hon. Gentleman (cheers). I wish that the repeal had been immediate instead of deferred (cheers), but in the present state of affairs, seeing the attachment that there is on the part of a large portion of the community to this protective system, I think the advantage so great, of getting rid of that system as respects corn in three years, and of almost every other protection giving way immediately afterwards, unless it be really some case which will bear argument, that I am unwilling to disturb in any way the settlement of this question (renewed cheers). This matter of Free Trade and Protection is not properly one of those questions which come within the domain of party. When Mr. Huskisson brought forward his plan, many of those who sat on his own side of the House were opposed to him ; many of us who sat opposite to him gave him our support. Plans of moderating duties, and introducing a tendency towards Free Trade, are not properly Whig plans ; they are not exclusively Tory plans (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Gentleman opposite, when Home Secretary, as I have always understood, and as he himself has stated, acted most cordially with Mr. Huskisson in the promotion of those measures. And if the Right Hon. Gentleman has the glory of adopting plans of commercial freedom which will benefit his country, which will enable the poor man to get a better reward for his labour, which will increase the demand for all the productions of this country, and which, after these questions are settled, will, I hope, open the way to the moral improvement of the people of this country, hitherto prevented by their want of adequate means of comfort (cheers),—if the Right Hon. Gentleman has the glory of carrying a measure fraught with such large and beneficial results, let ours be the solid satisfaction that, out of office, we have associated together for the purpose of aiding and assisting the triumph of the Minister of the Crown (loud and continued cheering).

SIR R. INGLIS thought it must have afforded some pleasure and no small amusement to his Hon. Friends opposite, to see so many of a numerous and once respected party, firing into each other's ships (laughter) He could not help asking himself, when he saw one after another of these broadsides discharged, what had become of the ardent zeal of the Hon. Member for Durham, of the erratic chivalry of the Member for Stockport, and the calmer gallantry of his Hon. Friend, the Member for Wolverhampton, though, perhaps, he was reposing under his laurels, or what had become of all the glowing zeal of the new converts to their principles (hear, hear). But his Noble Friend had now come to the rescue, and he must say, though he hoped he would not be tempted to say anything unjust or that would provoke an unkindly feeling in a debate that had hitherto been conducted with a singular disregard of all party provocations,—he must say he could not help thinking that his Noble Friend must have felt some pleasure when he found a party so divided against itself as they were that night (hear). The Noble Lord said all political economists concurred in the propositions which he laid down ; but, however able in many respects the speech of the Noble Lord had been, he had left wholly unproved the three propositions

which he maintained. They might perhaps be received on account of their intrinsic worth, but not from any support they had received from any arguments by the Noble Lord (hear). He would now advert, for two or three minutes, to the important subject before them. His view of the principle on which a legislature should proceed in treating such a subject as this was, that they should endeavour to procure the best supply of the food of man at the most moderate and equable prices. Now, he asked whether, looking at the whole system, which had lasted for a generation in this country, there was a country in Europe where the prices had been maintained at a rate so equable as in England? (hear). He did not deny that there had been great variations in prices, but in comparison with other countries, he contended that in England they had been slight. In that which depended on the providential arrangements of the seasons, on wet weather or dry, there must necessarily be great variations in price; but what he desired to enforce was, that in no country in Europe had these been so small as in England (hear). The largest variation that had been recorded in the price in England was 140 per cent., taken on an average of twenty-four years; but what had been the case in almost every other country? Taking two sea-ports—Bordeaux and Rotterdam, they found that the variation in the former was 260, and in the latter 225 per cent., instead of 140. In Prussia Proper, it was 212; in Brandenburg and Pomerania, 248; Saxony, 269; Westphalia, 334; and in the Rhenish Provinces nearly double what the variation was in England (hear). Now, that must be regarded as a basis of calculation much more extensive than the last three years (hear), or than any apprehensions of a famine, grievous as that famine might be, which was confined to one article of food and which was to be supplied by the substitution of another and higher price of food (hear, hear). He remembered some years ago reading an able article in a paper called the *Scotsman*, relative to the evil of bringing up the people of a country on the cheapest possible food, for then they had nothing upon which they could fall back. And he apprehended that, having brought up 4,000,000 of the people of Ireland, with potatoes for their food, they could not now supply them with anything as the fruit of their own labour cheaper than potatoes. In the remarkable speech which they had heard a fortnight ago, from the Right Hon. Gentleman, they were informed that all the countries that produced the potato, had prevented the exportation of that article; and proof of the fact was laid before the House from Sweden, Belgium, and Holland. The scarcity there was so great, that nothing could be hoped for from them in the present crisis; but this did not apply, it would appear, to other supplies of higher kinds of food. Turkey and Egypt had refused the exportation of the higher kinds of grain; but it did not follow that these could not be got from other quarters of the world. As to the twenty items of remission, of which they had heard so much, no man could undervalue those remissions in themselves more truly than he did. He should have been better pleased if, instead of giving £20,000 in one direction, and £40,000 in another, the First Minister of the Crown had taken a larger view of the agricultural interest, and proposed to assign to the consolidated fund a proportion of the poor

rate of England (hear). This, all men, according to their ability, ought to be liable to pay ; but they saw that a large proportion of the income of the country did not contribute as such one pound to the poor, whereas every acre of land and every house was taxed to a considerable extent for the necessities of the poor (hear, hear). They had been told that if they would agree to a Committee, the contrary would be proved. Was it meant that it would be proved that the landed interest did not directly pay sixpence to the poor, and that the converse of his proposition was true ? With respect to the proposals accompanying the new changes in the Corn Law system of this country, he could not help adverting to another interest, which appeared entirely to be disregarded by her Majesty's Ministers in the scheme then under consideration—he meant the question of rent-charges in lieu of tithe. The proposed change would seriously affect that question ; for, as matters at present stood, though the amount of produce might be the same, the money value would be materially reduced. He would take, for example, 20 quarters of wheat at 50s. This would yield £125 a-year. If the proposition of Ministers were carried into effect, and the price of corn should fall to 25s., the portion received as tithe would be the same as formerly, but the money price would be just one-half (hear, hear). And yet this was proposed to be done with reference to a solemn contract entered into almost within the last six or seven years, and it had been proposed by the Prime Minister without a single reference to the injustice of the measure now referred to (hear). It would be very easy to prove from Hansard and from county newspapers gross instances of inconsistency on the part of many of those who supported the present proposal of Ministers ; but it was needless to do so. The authors of the measures themselves admitted their inconsistency in the strongest terms—*habemus confitentes reos* (hear, hear). He would only say, that for his own part he would much rather, if the measure was to be carried at all, it should be carried by men who had consistently advocated it, than by those who had not (“hear, hear,” from Sir R. Peel). He (Sir R. Inglis) knew well enough what the Right Hon. Baronet intended by that cheer, because he knew that the Right Hon. Baronet, for the sake of having the measure carried, had resigned his place into the hands of the Noble Lord (hear, hear). He (Sir R. Inglis) repeated, that he deplored the course which had been adopted by the Right Hon. Baronet, and should give the measure all the resistance in his power. He asked himself at what time this measure had been brought forward ? It was not at a time when there was in Ireland, as in 1798, a body of thirty thousand armed men in the country. It was not at a time when there was in Ireland great monster meetings. It was at a time when in England we had prosperity almost unexampled, prosperity too, he begged it to be remembered, which had grown up under this very system which it was now attempted to put down (hear, hear). There had seldom been a time when this country was more flourishing than in the summer of 1845. It was a common maxim, *quieta non movere*, which being translated meant “Let well alone,” and he thought it a safe maxim (hear, hear). The Hon. Baronet then referred to some documents for the purpose of proving

that, though undoubtedly disease had prevailed among the potatoes, yet in one district, comprising 12 parishes, the produce in each parish was greater last year than in the year before. The conclusion drawn from these documents was confirmed by private accounts which he had received. Such being the case, there did not appear, in the circumstances under which the measure was proposed, or in the manner in which it was proposed, or in the men by whom it was proposed, any justification for the change of system, and he therefore gave his cordial support to the amendment of his Hon. Friend the Member for Bristol (hear, hear).

MAJOR FITZMAURICE, who was imperfectly heard, also spoke in favour of the amendment. He said that, under the tree of British protection, every species of industry had flourished in this country, and the result of free trade would be, that it would throw a large mass of land out of cultivation in exact proportion to the quantity of foreign corn imported from abroad, which was grown there at a cheaper rate than in this country. Taking the case of Poland, for instance, he had the authority of a person who had resided there for 12 years, for saying that wheat grown in Poland might be landed in the London market under 30s. a quarter. They were told that America would afford a great market for British manufactures, and he sincerely hoped it would prove so; but suppose America did not choose to take British manufactures in exchange for corn, but should insist on having gold, in what a condition would this country be then placed! He would ask the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government whether he did not know that nearly three-fourths of the whole shipping, which came into the port of London laden with corn during the last quarter, returned in ballast, or, in other words, they returned with gold for their corn? The Right Hon. Baronet took great credit to himself for the measures which he had brought forward, but that merit was entirely due to the Members for Stockport and Wolverhampton, and their friends (hear). Though no one was more opposed than himself to the policy of the Hon. Member for Stockport, yet no man was more willing to give credit where it was due; and if the proposed measure proved satisfactory to the country, he thought there was no situation which the country could offer too high for the services of that Hon. Member. In what manner was the motion of the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton and the speech of the Hon. Member for Stockport met, in 1844, by the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government? That Right Hon. Baronet then said that it might be very pleasing to indulge in the theories of modern philosophy and political economy, but when they had endangered and destroyed the happiness of a nation, they had then obtained but a very sorry return for their pains. He (Major Fitzmaurice), indeed feared that they now would have but a sorry return. It appeared to him that a most beneficial change might have been made in the Corn Law by the trifling alteration of taking the averages by weight instead of by measure. They would then have had bread and wheat at corresponding prices; whereas now the case was quite the reverse. The effect of this alteration, too, would have been to destroy the great monopolists in Mark-lane. Nothing could be worse than these eternal changes:

they not only interfered with the regular process of farming, but also with the regulation of labour throughout the year. How could they expect the farmer to lay out his capital in cultivation and improvement, when the highest in the land were changing the law every six months? What would be the use for him to go down to Buckinghamshire, and to tell the farmers, "The alteration in the Corn Law will not of itself ruin you, nor the changes in the tariff will not in themselves destroy you"—if there should be a variety of measures all tending to and uniting in the one point of ruin to the farmer? What mattered it to a man whether he was stung to death by a thousand needles, or killed by one thrust of a sword? And, for his part, he preferred the bold, manly system of the Hon. Member for Stockport, to the mince-meat, lady-like interference of the Right Hon. Baronet ("hear," and laughter). When the farmer found himself deserted by those who once pretended to be his friends,—when he found himself handed over to the tender mercies of the Hon. Gentlemen on the Opposition side by the Right Honourable Baronet, who was placed in the situation in which he now stood mainly by the farmer's exertions, could they feel surprised that under these circumstances the farmer should turn round, and in the bitterness of his disappointment exclaim:—

" Blow, blow, thou wintry wind,  
 " Thou art not so unkind  
 " As man's ingratitude?"

MR. S. HERBERT—If I were called upon to cite authority in confirmation of my opinions, and in favour of the expediency and justice of the course which her Majesty's Ministers are prepared to adopt, I think, of all the speeches I have heard this evening, I should select the two last speeches of my two Hon. Friends as those which furnish the strongest arguments against the conclusions which they announce as their convictions, and against the course which they intend to take on the present question. An attempt has been made to show, in a speech mixed up with much hostile feeling and prejudice against the conduct of her Majesty's Government, that there are no circumstances existing in this country which call for legislative interference—still less that there are grounds for interference to stop the usual course of law—that nothing has occurred either in this country or in Ireland which could have justified all parties in stepping out of their previous course, and announcing a great change of opinions—a change of opinions forced upon them by different circumstances, which no one by possibility could have contemplated. I wish I could agree with my Hon. Friend that there was not in Ireland any such cause for interference—that there was no cause for anxiety, none to justify any extreme step taken by the Government, none to justify Ministers in proposing to change the laws which regulate the importation of food. The Hon. Gentleman tells us—and he selects an electoral district in illustration—that there was a larger crop than the average sowed in Ireland, and therefore the loss was not so great as the increase which the unusual fertility of the fields produced (a voice, "yes, but potatoes"). Yes, but potatoes are a prime article of food in Ireland; and it is impossible to disconnect the failure of the potato crop from this question of food. It is not necessary for

me to expatiate upon the misery of a population depending upon that kind of food exclusively. We have this year a signal instance of the state to which a population may be reduced when it depends on such a kind of food for subsistence, and when that food is not susceptible of keeping from one harvest to another. The Commissioners, referring to the opinion that upon the whole the potato crop this year was a very large one, said, "We regret to add that we have been unable to obtain any proof of this, on the contrary, we have seen that the crop was small, and we have it in evidence that it is below the average; but we have also seen it to be heavy, and we therefore conclude that it may, perhaps, be an average crop." From first to last I must say that the reports which the Government had received from the constabulary and from the stipendiary Magistrates were most creditable to their judgment in this respect, that as they never gave in to the panic at first, they never gave in to the fool's paradise at last. They never gave in to the statement that there were no sound potatoes left. They never misinformed the Government, and they never in that reaction of the public mind—to which perhaps they are more subject in Ireland than in other parts of the empire—fled to the other extreme and told the Government that no danger was to be apprehended. So far as the failure of the crop in Ireland is concerned, I wish I stood here in the position of being obliged to state that the reports by which we have been guided are fallacious, our judgment erroneous, our precautions unnecessary. On the contrary, I fear that any inquiry you may institute will give a fearful and melancholy corroboration of the facts on which we have acted, and that our judgment will be proved true in a manner and to an extent which none can regret more warmly than we do. Potatoes are also a staple article of food in the west of England; their use has increased there almost as much as in Ireland. No man has put more strongly than the Noble Lord the Member for London, the paradoxes of a scarcity of food with cheapness, owing to the inferiority of what is produced. So the averages of corn were depressed last season by the inferior quality of the grain. I do not stand on a point of consistency when I frankly avow that I think the law of 1842 has failed (cheers); that the first time it was tested by adverse circumstances it failed, and signally failed. For short harvests the law of 1842 would have worked; for it was a mitigation of the principle of protection (cheers). Hon. Gentlemen forget that the whole object of the Corn Law enacted in 1815 was to effect the transition from the high prices of war to the low prices of peace. Every statesman altered it. How? To increase protection? No; but to carry out the principle in the same spirit in which it originated. Seeing the existing state of matters, seeing the law had failed of its purpose, that food was deficient in quantity and inferior in quality—that the deficiency was common to the whole of Europe—that in consequence of that deficiency other countries had opened their ports for importations of grain—while Turkey, Egypt, and others had closed theirs against exportations of grain—that other countries on which we had depended for supplies had become competitors against us for the purchase of grain—under these circumstances I thought, with others in her Majesty's Govern-

ment, that it was necessary to take steps for meeting the difficulties under which the country was labouring. I am glad to hear from the Hon. Member for Somerset that he was not one who was adverse to opening the ports—that he was not prepared to oppose such a measure if its necessity were absolutely shown. I regret, even now, that the course we then contemplated was not adopted. I think that in cases of public emergency, promptness and vigour ought to be exercised (“hear, hear,” from the Opposition benches). I thought, under these circumstances, that if the Government at once took upon itself the responsibility of these measures, the battle would have been half won (hear, hear). I knew this, moreover, and say what Gentlemen may in this House they will not persuade me to the contrary—that the gentry and the agriculturists of England were not men to set up their pecuniary or other interests in opposition to the public advantage (“hear,” and cheers). My Noble Friend, the Member for Liverpool (to whose speech, though it has been claimed by the Hon. Member for the University of Oxford, I also may lay claim, because I think it proves the accuracy of our anticipations of the results of Free Trade), expressed with some earnestness his regret that this measure should have been proposed by the Government of the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel). I have no hesitation in saying, that I held the same opinion; and that I strongly advocated the necessity of this measure being entrusted to other hands than ours. When I hear assertions as to the effect the measure suggested by her Majesty’s Government is to produce upon the agricultural interest in this country, I wish Hon. Members would show us how we are to be ruined by a more extended commerce, and from what countries the abundant supplies of wheat they anticipate are to be imported. I heard an Hon. Gentleman say, a short time since, that wheat could be imported into London from Poland at 30s. per quarter. Such a thing certainly has not yet happened. If you go to Dantzic you may buy Polish wheat, but I doubt whether you would get it at anything like so cheap a rate as the Honourable Member anticipates. I am afraid if he enters into any contract of that description, that ruin will fall upon himself rather than upon the agricultural interest. In Dantzic the prices of wheat are now as high as they are in London; and whenever there is, in that place, the slightest demand for wheat the price rises rapidly. It must be remembered that in these producing countries the fluctuations in price arise from two different causes; from the nature of their harvests, and from our demand. One place from which a very large supply of corn is expected, which might, it is supposed, interfere materially with our own produce, is Odessa. I have made inquiries as to the state of the markets there, and I find that the price has frequently been 30s., 31s., and 32s. per quarter. At Malta, which is supplied with Odessa wheat, the average price is about 32s. or 33s.; and the cost of the transit of that wheat to this country would bring it to a price at which it could scarcely enter into competition with our own. (The Right Hon. Gentleman here spoke for some moments in so low and indistinct a tone, that it was impossible in the gallery to collect the purport of several of his observations.) You will find it impossible that any great quantity of corn can be brought here

from Dantzic or Odessa to compete successfully with our home produce ; and those are the two great continental ports from which importations are expected. Spain, where corn can be produced cheaper perhaps than in any other country, receives large importations from America. Great apprehensions are also entertained of the extensive importations of corn anticipated from the United States. I find that in Ohio, the largest and most fertile State in the Union, the population increases much more rapidly than the production. The population has increased from 45,000 in 1800, to nearly 2,000,000 at the present time. The total exports of flour and wheat, from the United States, have been gradually diminishing for the last 15 years. It is time now that we should allay the apprehensions which exist on this subject ; that we should prevent the agriculturists of this country from being scared from their propriety by alarms which are founded in delusion. I found, in considering the present circumstances of the country, that a state of things existed which promised a succession of high prices for one, two, or more years. I saw that a great change of opinion had taken place in the public mind on this question. I found that a great change had taken place even in the opinion of the agriculturists themselves ; and that among the tenant-farmers there was an impression, which I have heard them express frequently in strong language, that this is a landlord's question. An Hon. Gentleman who has spoken to-night, has said he considers that any depreciation in the value of produce must be divided between the landlords and the tenants—that it must affect the rent of the one as well as the profits of the other. The tenants had taken leases on what was called the Act of Parliament prices. The market price was below the Act of Parliament price, and the landlord got the benefit of the difference. Sir, I felt that if these opinions were prevalent among farmers holding large quantities of land, it would be impossible to maintain the existing system. The supporters of that system said, “let us be quit of that which is so uncertain, which depends on Parliamentary majorities, the caprices of members of Parliament, the turns of public affairs ; let us trust to our own skill, capital, and industry, and then we shall have nothing to complain of. At all events it will be better than a state of uncertainty.” These were the opinions of the occupying tenants ; and as to the feelings of the labourers, I appeal to every agricultural gentleman whether they do not entertain similar opinions (“hear, hear,” from the Opposition side). Sir, a meeting took place at a village called Goatacre, in my county (hear)—a meeting which has been alluded to in a different sense by different parties in this House (hear). Now I am not prepared to deny—indeed I think on the face of the resolutions agreed to at that meeting it is obvious that those resolutions were not drawn up by working men, that the proceedings were pre-organized and contrived by others (hear, hear). But this I am bound to state, that the statements of those working men as to the difficulties they labour under were correct (hear, hear). I live in the midst of a population as to whom I scarcely know how they exist (hear, hear). That is a question which has disturbed more men's minds than mine. Sir, Honourable Gentlemen, my colleagues, have thought, and thought

painfully, on these things. They have said, "I don't care what change you make, I defy you to make their condition worse." I am not one of those who would say, as Hon. Gentlemen opposite would, that this state of things is the effect of the protective system. But, at the same time, although it may not have been the cause of these things, it does not follow that it may not help to remove them. I will read to the House a letter I received to-day from a man of great intelligence, who farms what is called "high farms," who manures his land highly, and is thoroughly master of the subject:—"I am quite sure that if the Wiltshire hills were farmed as they ought to be, and as under the proposed measure I hope they will be, you would not find a labourer unemployed in the whole county. Light-land farmers attach too much importance to their wheat crops; they grow corn on too large a proportion of their farm, and do not consume half enough on their land by stock—viz., they ought to produce more beef, mutton, and pork, and less grain. I can, Sir, give you an example how far good and high farming permanently improves the soil. There was a common field in Berkshire which was occupied by several persons,—one of whom was a baker, who had three acres in different parts of the field. He used to fatten a great many pigs, which made much very rich manure; this he applied very liberally to his land,—and, although it is ten years since the field was divided, yet the baker's acres may be discovered at this day by the most casual observer from their increased and surpassing fertility,—thus proving not only the advantages of this high system of cultivation, but the necessity of a long tenure to enable the farmer to obtain such a full return as his energy and capital so well merit. By compliance with the conditions I have above mentioned the landlord's rentals will not be decreased, but their tenants will be prosperous, and their labourers employed at good wages. Another argument which is used by the opponents of Free Trade is, 'the reduction which it will cause in the wages of the agricultural labourer,' founding this opinion on the fallacy that the price of labour varies with the price of wheat. Now, my own experience fully controverts this statement, for since I have been in Wiltshire, I have sold wheat as high as 78s. and as low as 40s. per quarter, and have only paid two rates of wages, i. e. 9s. and 8s. per week, a variation by no means commensurate with that of the proposed standard; and I cannot but think, if the condition I have spoken of before were complied with, that the increased demand for labour arising from the safer employment of more capital on our farms, and the general better cultivation of them, will more than counterbalance the slight difference in wages which so large a variation in the price of wheat may have caused." There has been much misapprehension on this subject, because Hon. Gentlemen will draw deductions from what falls under their own eye rather than from a general view. It is incontestable in the manufacturing districts, and we have lately had additional proofs of it, that so far from wages fluctuating with the price of food, the price of food rises while wages fall. When a fall in the price of wheat takes place wages will fall, but when the price of wheat rises wages do not rise in proportion (hear, hear). Well, Sir, for these reasons, and seeing these

changes of opinion among the very classes who profess to support those laws, I first thought they were not maintainable, but still more, I considered that they ought not to be maintained because being no longer accepted by the community they became most unjust. That this was a time for making the change with the least prospect of the infliction of suffering was an additional reason why it should take place. I say now is the time to concede with honour, when there is no appearance that your concession is exerted by violence. There is no danger from agitation at your doors. Arguments you have had which I confess have great weight in my mind ; but the amount of the agitation of the League, and, though it has been by men of the greatest ability, has been much overrated. Like the armies we see paraded on the stage, the same men have served for the same parts many times over. The agitation of the League has not been that of masses, such as we have seen in the case of former agitations. It has been an agitation not of force, but of reason. If you do not now yield to reason, to that agitation some day force may be added, and then you will yield, not as now, with honour, but with the loss of station, influence, and character. I now come to a ground I wish to touch upon, and which I frankly avow to you is with me a stronger motive than all, why we should set ourselves free from the continuance of this law. The public mind is not in the state it was in in 1815. At that time these matters were so little understood that those gentlemen who were the heads of the party who brought forward this question, Lord Liverpool and the men of that time, brought it forward as an exception to a recognized principle. It has been so dealt with ever since. In 1841, when the Noble Lord opposite brought forward his budget, I frankly avowed my complete adhesion to the principles of Free Trade, but I objected to the mode of their application to corn. I said that corn was an exception from them on account of the rapidity with which they would be applied. But now the public mind is enlarged upon the subject (loud cheers). You have men of all classes, of all shades, and of all colours, and engaged in all domestic pursuits, beginning to think that one part of the community has a benefit over another. Then, if we are to stand upon such ground as that, we stand upon a mine, upon a rotten footing, and we cannot maintain it (hear, hear). Talk of party,—the Hon. Gentleman says that the party is broken up. I do not admit that this party, Conservative party or Tory party,—call it by what name you will,—is bound together by no greater object than a Customs' duty upon the importation of foreign corn. Look at the intention of these laws. Was it party intention? We have had Corn Laws ever since the reign of Charles II., and why were they granted? For the purpose of regulating the importation of foreign produce. That was in bygone times,—but they were enacted for that purpose. I could show you cases when the duty was no higher than 6*d.* a quarter,—when the laws were suspended, and the ports were opened. But, it has been said, that party is part of our constitution. I think it is contrary to the whole spirit of our constitution (hear, hear). I am not one of those who wish to see the constitution of this country rendered more democratic than it is. I cannot think that the public mind wishes it to be more democratic than it is. I

think late events have rather shown that the mantles of despotic kings who disgraced the world have fallen upon democratic rather than upon temperate and mixed Governments (hear, hear). I wish to see the aristocratic element preserved in our constitution, and it is upon that account I say, do not peril it on a question in which your motives may be impugned (hear, hear); when once you are convinced, as I am, that these laws are not for the good of the community. I say that, with that opinion, no earthly power can induce me to rise from this bench to defend them. They may say that the country gentlemen are a party having great power and influence; that that power and influence have been given to us to be exercised for the public good; but that we have used it for the increase of our incomes. I cannot deny that these laws have that effect; but I say I should sit with shame upon my face were I to hear such an accusation made, and were I unable to refute it (hear, hear). Hon. Members must recollect that great changes had taken place in the last 50 years in the social constitution of this country; that the manufacturing power has increased to an enormous degree; you may dislike the effect of it—you may think it congregates together great masses of men—that you have less security for their morality and welfare; but depend upon it, it is a power you cannot check or control; it has become a permanent element in our society; it has great wealth, and offers great employment; it is a source of that commerce which has maintained our colonial empire and given us the dominion we possess throughout the world. You must recollect, too, that it is now, as it has always been, the great source of our maritime power, and you must also recollect that if you intend to maintain this great empire, and think as I do, that it is possible to carry its free institutions, and temperate liberties, and reformed faith to other parts of the globe, it is by these humble means that you are enabled to do it; it is by extending your commerce that you are able to carry your institutions into every part of the world, and to civilise and exalt the remotest and the wildest regions (cheers). You must recollect, too, that men who give you these benefits are entitled not only to a full share of what they contribute to posterity, but to a full share also of the advantages of the state (hear, hear). My Noble Friend who opened the discussion at the meeting of Parliament, in one of those eloquent and graceful speeches so characteristic of him (hear), pointed out how if your interest is a commercial interest, if your interest be to have peace, security, and the maintenance of your institutions, that is most likely to be secured. You must recollect that those gentlemen whose pursuits depend so much upon public tranquillity are the best auxiliaries for maintaining those things under which this empire has so long flourished—those institutions which do not depend upon Customs' duties, but which have grown with the growth of this country, that require to be constantly amended, but with a tender and reverential hand. I wish to see the two interests of agriculture and manufactures united. If there has been a fault of legislation it is not a fault on either side; but I wait to see these two knitted together. I believe the proposals of the Government have a tendency to cement the two. I believe that the proposals of the

Government, being involved in a large and comprehensive scheme, will produce a change in such a way as to produce little loss or suffering to the interests affected: and I believe further, that when the country shall have maturely considered them, and when the constituencies more exclusively agricultural, shall have calmly considered them, they will think that those proposals offer a means of escaping from that protection which they no longer require, that they have the means of attaching to themselves large masses of men who have been taught by circumstances to be almost hostile to them; that they may follow their pursuits without doubt and uncertainty, and the loss attendant upon them from which they have hitherto suffered (hear, hear). I should lament, moreover, to see the class to which you and I belong, and which I consider to be one of the noblest spheres of usefulness that exists in private life in any country in the world—I mean a class of English country gentlemen—debased in any way, or lose its natural influence, and I know no way in which that influence can be so weakened as by your maintenance of a law, from which, in my conscience, I believe you derive no advantage whatsoever, but which I consider to be unjust and impolitic, and must lower you in public estimation, by giving to those who watch your proceedings false, but I admit most injurious notions as to the motives by which you are actuated. You have now an opportunity of repairing the greatest error ever committed by any body of men (loud cheers from the Opposition). I may assert that the gentry of this country have been distinguished from those of all other countries in the world as having never been the advocates of disgraceful immunities; while other aristocracies have been the sycophants of courts, they have borne the chief burdens of the state; they have given to the state their service and their blood and treasure, and from them have sprung some of the most eminent men in the field, the church, or in the walks of science, this country has ever produced. I am anxious that our character should be maintained (hear, hear). Hon. Gentlemen laughed just now, but I do think that the law of 1815 was a great error (hear, hear). We offer you the means of repairing it. I trust you will accept it. For myself, my own mind has for some time been firmly made up to it. I believe the measures we propose will be for the interest of all classes of the community. I have confidence of their success in this house—I have confidence in the results that will follow from them—and I leave them in your hands, with the earnest and sincere hope that without previous bias, without party or resentful feeling, and believing that they are for the interest of yourselves as well as of the community at large, you will sanction the measures which the Government have proposed to you for the public good, and for the public good alone (loud cheers).

On the motion of Mr. S. O'BRIEN, the debate was then adjourned.

#### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10.

On the motion of Mr. CARDWELL the order of the day for resuming the adjourned debate on the Customs' and Corn Importation Act was agreed to.

LORD EBRINGTON presented a petition, as we understood, from tenant-farmers, in favour of the Repeal of the Corn Laws.

Mr. S. O'BRIEN was reminded by the petition now presented by the Noble Lord, of the statement put forth last night by the Noble Lord the member for the City of London, that the farmers of this country were now in favour of an immediate repeal of the duties on corn, if they had not previously made up their minds to that extent; and that the Noble Lord pressed upon Her Majesty's Government to take the propriety of immediate repeal into their serious consideration, now that the Government measure had been laid before the farmers and the country, and that a general opinion had been expressed in its favour. Now, whether there was a general opinion among those farmers to whom the Noble Lord referred in favour of that measure he would not take upon him to say, nor would he pronounce any opinion on the matter; but he would only say that the parties to whom the Noble Lord referred did not express the opinion of the farmers generally upon this question (hear). He had some hope of directing the attention of the House and the country to a full explanation of their views on this subject. He had not changed his opinions upon this matter. His Hon. Friend (Mr. S. Herbert), who spoke last night, had not only felt it his duty to announce the change of his opinions in reference to this great question, but had uttered a sentiment the end of which was drowned by the cheers from that side of the House, that the law of 1815 was the greatest error this country ever saw (hear, hear). That law might be the greatest error ever perpetrated in this country; but he looked to that side of the House and asked, if it was the greatest error, who were those who had been hitherto conjuring the landed interest of this country not to revoke the error, but to persevere in it and maintain it? (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Gentleman said that now he gave them an opportunity of revoking that error. Obligated as they were by the courtesy of the Right Hon. Gentleman, he must say, however, that this was not the first opportunity given to the country gentlemen to repair that error, if error it was. The Hon. Member for Wolverhampton had often afforded them that opportunity, but they had always refused to avail themselves of it; and the most powerful and skilful reasons why they would not avail themselves of it were the reasons that had been given by the Right Hon. Gentleman (hear). It had hitherto been the custom in this country to uphold by the discussion of questions of party principles the distinct enunciation of those principles; having always before them the expectation that they were in this way best eliciting the truth and conducing to sound legislation (hear, hear). It might be observed, that not only had the Government changed the principles upon which they came into office, but they had taught the lesson that protection, as a distinct principle, should henceforth cease to be a bond of party altogether (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. S. Herbert) had said the preceding night, and he really thought that was the sum and substance of his speech, that inasmuch as the law of 1842 had failed, therefore he was prepared to abandon entirely those protective principles upon which he came into office. The Right Hon. Gentleman had said that the law of 1842 had failed; but the word "failure" might be understood in two ways, and when he remembered what the Right Hon. Gentle-

distress in that county was not attributable to the Right Hon. Gentleman (hear, hear). But he (Mr. O'Brien) must say, on the other hand, that if the Right Hon. Gentleman brought forward the cause of distress in Ireland, as a reason for the proposed change, he had totally failed, inasmuch as he had failed to show how the repeal of the Corn Laws would remedy the evil. The Noble Lord the member for London (Lord John Russell) in his speech last night had laid down three propositions which he assumed to be incontrovertible, the long and short of which was that protection to British industry was no longer tenable, and that the Legislature ought in future to foster neither agriculture nor manufactures, but leave them to "flourish or to fa'e" according to the energy and skill of the people of this country. Now, he (Mr. O'Brien) thought he was not quoting the Noble Lord unfairly, neither did he think he was quoting the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government unfairly, if he assumed that the principle so laid down was in future to be acted upon by the Legislature of this country. The Noble Lord assumed that the propositions were true because all political economists had agreed upon them. Now, notwithstanding that he might thereby expose himself to the charge of bigotry and old-fashioned prejudice, and "clay intellect," he ventured to dissent from the Noble Lord's propositions, and to say, that even if political economists had agreed upon them, there were other considerations which would require to enter into a statement of the question before he could give his unqualified assent. Writers on political economy, he (Mr. O'Brien) thought, were too apt to confound the science of political economy with that of legislation. His notion of political economy was, that it was a science referring to the accumulation and the distribution of wealth, which he held to be only one among many elements which entered into the science of legislation. But he would proceed to notice the question of protection to British industry—a question which the Noble Lord the member for London said had recently been interwoven with the question of agriculture—not recently, however, he would have the Noble Lord to know, for it had been interwoven before the existence of the protection societies. But it was said that labour was the property of the poor man. Very well—assuming this definition to be true—the parties making it must not, unless they wished to be misunderstood, stop there. They must, while they were meeting there every day for six months, for the protection of their own property,—they must tell the poor man that his property, his labour, would not be protected, but that it must protect itself; that they must be left to fight it out with foreign competition; and that they (the Legislature) were to sit quietly above, and watch whether they triumphed or not. The axiom of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, and that the property of the poor man needed no protection, was a very plausible one; but see how it operated. Suppose an individual to buy his paper-hangings in Paris, his carriages in Brussels, and his hardware in Germany; and suppose, while he was looking out of the window of his smart house, or his elegant carriage, he saw the labourers all idle because of the new law which had passed in favour of the introduction of these articles;

and suppose he said to them, "My good fellows, I have done my best to make you poor and wretched, but I have not done so from any selfish motive. On the 27th of January, 1846, it was propounded by the head of the Government that the property of the poor needed no protection, and that in future we should all buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest, and I have only a wish to promote my own interest by acting upon those principles." What poor consolation this would be to the poor workman! He begged the House also to think not only of the amount of poverty which these proposals, if carried out, would occasion, but of the amount of alienation and disaffection which they would occasion (hear). The amount of the duties was not the question. That which was protection ten years ago might be more than protection now; to continue it at the same amount might be unjust—it might be fatal to the producer himself. He (Mr. S. O'Brien) protested against any change such as was proposed in a complex state of society like that which existed in this country; and he agreed with the Noble Lord the Member for London (Lord John Russell) in thinking that it would have been better had a single change taken place in 1842, instead of one then and another now; the transition would have been thereby rendered easier—the shock would have been broken. He had not been careless in studying the operation of the Corn Law during the last four years. If he could not agree with those who now thought the protection excessive, he must acknowledge a change of opinion produced by so studying the operation of the law. He had believed that this was a landlord's question, that a sudden repeal would throw a large quantity of land into the market with the effect of deteriorating the price. But, from what he had read and seen, he doubted very much whether such would be the result. If it were a landlord's question, it was only a question of the small landed proprietor (cheers), who, on the faith of previous legislation, might have charged his estate to an extent beyond the means which an altered state of the law would leave available for his extrication. But he (Mr. S. O'Brien) looked on this as a tenant-farmer's question, and so far from abandoning his opposition because he so believed, on that ground he took his stand, and refused to assent to the proposed alteration. He might take the opportunity of applying the new philosophy to this tenant-farmer's question. The tenant-farmer came to the landlord and said—"You see the change that has taken place; you know its effects, and I hope you will allow an abatement of rent. My family has held under your family. We have weathered the storm in difficult times. I have worn your colours; and I shall be very sorry to go anywhere else" (cheers). The landlord would reply—"My good fellow, I am very sorry for you. You have invested your capital in those drains; I too have invested my capital. You invested yours on the faith of legislative enactments; but so did I. We are told to buy in cheap and sell in dear markets. A gentleman from the manufacturing districts is largely interested in your farm. We talk of feudal times, of days long gone by, of your wearing my old colours. Those are old exploded notions; but as to colours, I tell you, my good fellow, there is no true blue now" (great cheering from the protectionists). So, unless the landlord acted towards the tenant

with better faith and kindlier feeling than the agricultural interest had experienced, the tenant-farmer must go forth on the world. A few months ago a farmer came to him and said—"I have got a fortune left me." "Take your good land, then," was the reply, "and farm it for yourself." "Why," said the farmer, "there are the gravestones of four generations of my race in the church-yard—father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather. I will not invest my money anywhere else; I shall stick to the old farm." To his mind, the heart of that old fellow was worth a very heavy volume of political economy (cheers). And (continued the Hon. Gentleman) it is hundreds of thousands of men like that—of men, not with such fortunes in their pockets, but with such hearts in their bosoms, whom you are driving forth by your legislation with broken hearts and ruined families (cheers). Neither is it too much to say that when—feeling the effect of your policy—they take a retrospect of the past, their keenest associations, their bitterest recollections of the period from which they will date their blighted hopes and broken fortunes, will not be with the name of Cobden (loud cheers). We will not aid you in your triumph over those old men. We do not envy a triumph which we do not participate; and small in numbers, yet it may not be without some influence, we will raise our voices against the injustice you are about to perpetrate. You may exult in your triumph over a body of men who are loading that table with petitions and who see ruin staring them in the face. Moderation in prosperity and patience in adversity were their virtues, and their greatest fault was that they trusted you, and you are prepared to triumph over them (I can give it no milder term), in strange coalition with men who, true to their principles (cheers from the protectionists), can neither welcome you as friends nor respect you as opponents (renewed cheers); of whom I must say, in conclusion, that the best and most patriotic of them will least rejoice to witness the ruin and downfall of a great constitutional party, and will most deplore the loss of public confidence in public men (great cheering from the protectionists).

MR. S. CRAWFORD considered that the eloquence of the last speaker was much greater than the power of his arguments; for though he professedly took great interest in the welfare of the working man, he showed the value of his professions by refusing to give to that working man cheap food. Nothing would promote the prosperity of the country so much as cheap corn, and therefore it was that he wished to repeal every tax which was imposed on its importation from foreign countries. He then entered into a discussion upon the social and domestic condition of Ireland, and upon the bearing of the changes now proposed upon the labouring population of that country; and after warning the House that the danger of famine in Ireland was not visionary, but actual and substantial, concluded by declaring his intention of giving his cordial support to the proposition of her Majesty's Government on this occasion.

MR. H. BAILLIE lamented that this question should have been made the war-cry of a party, as it rendered it more difficult to discuss with calmness and without acrimony one of the most difficult questions within the whole range of political economy. After pointing

out the fatal results produced by free trade in India, where the free importation of British manufactures had destroyed the native manufactures, and had caused greater numbers to perish by famine than had ever perished under the sword of any conqueror, he asked whether we could be surprised that foreign Governments, witnessing such results, should refuse to try the experiment of free trade upon their own people, and should impose barriers against the free introduction of our goods into their dominions? He did not, however, conceive that this determination on their part ought to induce us to try that experiment upon our own countrymen. It was an old axiom, that there was an intimate connexion between agriculture and commerce, and that any measure which injured or benefited the one must also injure or benefit the other. As our master manufacturers had made greater profits during the last year than during any year previously, it would not be irrelevant to inquire into the causes of that prosperity. Were those causes to be found exclusively in the new tariff? No; they were also to be found in three good harvests which had successively followed each other. Then it was clear that the prosperity of agriculture had been most conducive to the prosperity of commerce; and such being the case, the question arose how could we best promote our agriculture? Was it by affording to it a moderate protection, or by permitting it to meet unmitigated competition with countries which, from their climate and fertility, enjoyed advantages over our own country for the growth of corn? He thought that if we adopted the latter course, a portion of our wheat-land must be thrown out of cultivation, and we must become dependent on foreign countries for a large portion of our supply. It was his opinion that free trade would increase our population on the one hand, and would decrease our natural means of subsistence on the other. This question, however, could not be decided on its own merits; for before we come to a conclusion upon it we must take into our consideration all the circumstances of the country, and, above all, the mischief of the continuance of that struggle in which the interests of the great masses of the people were arrayed against the interests of a few. We must also take into consideration that besides the two classes in the country now pitted against each other, the leading men of all parties in that House were united in the doctrine that some great alteration in the Corn Laws was necessary, and that those who opposed that alteration were themselves unable to form a Government. We have, therefore, only the choice of two alternatives—we must either accept the compromise now offered to us, or throw out the present Administration to make room for another equally pledged to the abolition of all duties on the importation of foreign corn. Under such circumstances, he should support the proposition of the Government from a conviction that in so doing he was supporting the best interests of the British empire.

Mr. LEBNOY commented on the speech of Mr. S. Crawford on the wretched condition of the population of Ireland, and asked how this measure was calculated to improve it, or to raise the capital of the landlords and farmers of Ireland, who were the employers of labour? He declared himself compelled, as an Irish Member, to oppose the proposition of the Government, which he denounced as a most rash and hazardous experiment.

LORD CLEMENTS had no hesitation in meeting the challenge of the last speaker, and in contending that this proposition would not be injurious either to the population or to the landlords of Ireland. He wished Hon. Members would inquire how far the Corn Laws had benefited the agricultural population of Ireland. Nothing could be more destitute or deplorable than the condition of the peasantry of that country. It was forcibly depicted in the report of Lord Devon's Commission, and still more forcibly in the spirited communications of the Commissioner of *The Times*. He bore the highest testimony to the accuracy of this Commissioner's statements, and asserted that there was not a single syllable in the slightest degree exaggerated in his description of the calamitous state of the Irish peasantry. What, then, was, or what would be, the benefit of protection to a population in such deplorable misery? Had it been, or would it be, of the slightest use either to the tenant-farmer, or had it prevented, or would it prevent, the labourer from standing idle in the market-place? No such thing. He should, therefore, give his support to the Government proposition for the alteration in the Corn Laws. He then expressed at some length his opinions on the other parts of Sir R. Peel's scheme relative to the payment of the police and of the cost of prosecutions in Ireland.

The MARQUIS OF GRANBY believed that Sir R. Peel was actuated by the most pure and honourable motives; but if he had promulgated in 1841 the same opinions which he now entertained, he would not have proposed them now as a Minister of the Crown. It was not a fair way of putting the question to say that the labourer, if the Corn Laws were repealed, would be enabled to buy cheaper bread. The question was, would he be able to buy and to eat more bread? He was afraid that the labourer would not be able; for where subsistence was cheap, labour was cheap also, and the condition of the population most miserable. Sir Robert had told the House that he could not hold out hopes that foreign nations would follow our example or relax the regulations of their tariffs. But even if they did, you might increase your exports, but in the same proportion your home consumption of manufacturers would fall off, as your agriculturists would be deprived of funds wherewith to purchase them. He should support the principle of protection, which had mainly conduced to the greatness, the happiness, and welfare of Great Britain.

MR. GREGORY contended that agriculture had flourished hitherto in this country, not through, but in spite of protection. He derided the fears of the agriculturists, that land would be thrown out of cultivation, and that we should become dependent on foreign nations for supply, if we acceded to the proposition of Government. He hoped that the House possessed too much true courage to be afraid of the imputation that this measure was granted as a concession to agitation. The only mischief which he anticipated from it was that which would arise from continuing a portion of the existing duties for three years, instead of abolishing them entirely at once. He gave his cordial support to the commercial policy of Sir R. Peel.

LORD BROOKE, as the representative of a large and important county, explained the reasons which induced him to give, on this

his first entrance upon public life, his decided opposition to the commercial policy proposed by Sir R. Peel. The change in that policy was, no doubt, conscientious on the part of the Right Hon. Baronet ; but he must say that the conduct of some of Sir Robert's supporters in agreeing to the same change was not equally straightforward, for it was so sudden as to be almost miraculous. He pointed out the inconsistency of Lord Sandon in supporting a measure which he had denounced as unworthy of approbation, and amused the House, now approaching from its age to a dissolution, by comparing it to a decrepit old man, who from the length of his life had lost his memory, and with it all the recollection of his former pledges. He was afraid too that it was imitating the same old dotard in its mode of making its will, and in defrauding its lawful heirs by bequeathing its property to strangers and aliens. He then handled with considerable tact the usual agricultural arguments against the repeal of the Corn Laws, and declared his intention of voting against the Government proposition.

LORD WORSLEY said, he felt anxious to address the House on a question which, though it had frequently attracted the attention of the House, had now assumed a new shape, since it was not brought forward as an abstract question, but was brought forward by the Government on the ground of expediency : "Could you prove to us that the true principles of mercantile dealing required us to purchase corn in the cheapest market, and to withdraw the capital which has fertilized the inferior soils of this country, for the purpose of supplying it to the rich but unprofitable wastes of Poland—still we should hesitate. If you had called on us to abandon this protection with all the authority of an united Administration, with the exhibition of superior sagacity, and triumphant reasoning, we should not have been deaf to your appeal ; but when, inviting us to follow you, you present nothing but distracted councils, conflicting colleagues, statements of facts not to be reconciled, and arguments leading to opposite conclusions, then we peremptorily refuse to surrender our judgments to your guidance, and to throw the protection secured to agriculture by the existing law into the lottery of legislation, in the faint hope that we might by chance draw the prize of a better Corn Bill." It was the first step towards making England the workshop of the world, dependent for its daily food upon continental supplies. He believed that other measures might have been proposed, which would have met with the concurrence of the House. The Government might be able to carry the measure they now proposed, but, as he had said before, it would not be regarded as a settlement of the question. Until the year 1849 one party would entertain a hope that they might obtain an alteration of the law which would conduce to their own interests, while the other party would cherish the expectation that they might be enabled to get rid of protection altogether at an earlier period than was proposed by the Right Hon. Baronet. In 1842 the Right Hon. Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sir J. Graham) took another line of argument with reference to the benefits of the Corn Law—he eulogized the advantages of the bonding system. The Right Honourable Baronet said, "that the warehouses of foreign corn in bond, ready to be

brought into the market for home consumption (whatever might be the loss to individuals), had all the advantage of public granaries to this country at the cost of individuals." But this would not be the case under the proposed measure ; and he (Lord Worsley) was at a loss to conceive how the Right Hon. Baronet could reconcile the arguments he used on that occasion with his support of the scheme now under their consideration. He did not know that any Hon. Member of that House had spoken in stronger terms against the total repeal of the Corn Laws than the Hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. G. Smythe), who had recently taken office under the Right Hon. Baronet, as Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (hear, hear). That Hon. Gentleman said, in 1842, that "If they put corn on the same footing as tobacco, if they discouraged or prohibited its culture in England, the consumer would benefit greatly, and so would the revenue. But what, in that case would become of the agriculturists? Were they prepared to sacrifice one-third of the population—he was taking Mr. Babbage's calculation—to the other two-thirds? Such might be the scheme of a Minister of a party ; such ought not to be the scheme of a Minister of a nation ; such was not the plan of the Right Honourable Baronet." Several Honourable Gentlemen had urged upon the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir Robert Peel) the necessity of dissolving Parliament, on the ground that the present Parliament was one which ought not to determine the question now brought before them. It was true that, under ordinary circumstances, a Parliament which had been elected for seven years was justified in considering any question that might be brought before them upon its merits. But, although, at the time the present Parliament was elected, an 8s. duty had been suggested by some Hon. Gentlemen on that side of the House, it was considered by the country that the question at issue was—Corn Laws or no Corn Laws. There could be no doubt whatever that the opinions of the majority of the constituency thus taken at the last general election were opposed to any alteration in the Corn Laws (hear). He was convinced that those electors who had returned to Parliament members who, as they believed, were opposed to any change in the Corn Laws, would be grievously disappointed if their representatives did not vote in accordance with the principles they had formerly professed (hear). He did not know whether the circumstance might be in the recollection of the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel), but in 1842, the then Vice-President of the Board of Trade (Mr. W. E. Gladstone), who now filled the office of Secretary for the Colonies, but who, for some reason unknown to him, did not appear in the House to night (hear, and a laugh), had stated that this Parliament was pledged to the maintenance of protection. The Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Gladstone) then said—"He did fervently trust and believe, that the House, indicating and adhering to its wise and practical character, would adopt, and by a large majority, the measure which had been recommended by the Government, as a great practical improvement, as a change, considerable and beneficial to the entire community, while maintaining that great principle which the House was pledged to maintain—a reasonable protection to the agricultural interests of this country, and to that

large, he would even say, that decidedly preponderating proportion of the population which was directly or indirectly, but essentially connected with and dependent upon those interests" (hear, hear). The Hon. Gentleman considered that Parliament was pledged to continue protection; that was the opinion of the agriculturists and others, and they asked, because they thought, that having altered their opinions, Hon. Members might persuade some of their supporters to do so also. They wished that the question should be put to the country, aye or no. Ought there to be an alteration in the Corn Laws or not? (hear, hear). He had presented sixty petitions to the House, all praying that the alterations in the Customs' duties might not be made, and also praying that the House would place no confidence in her Majesty's Prime Minister (hear). These petitions were got up without any knowledge on his part; and he was never more surprised than to find that this was the prayer, because he recognized in those petitions the signatures of many gentlemen who at the last election refused to support him, because he would not place confidence in the Right Hon. Gentleman opposite (hear). It seemed rather extraordinary that this change which was proposed now by her Majesty's Government was not expected by some of their supporters. His Noble Friend the member for the city of London, gave warning to the Members of that House, that a change might be expected. He held in his hand the answer of his Noble Friend to an address voted to him at Plymouth, in the year 1841, in which the Noble Lord said—"That, if the people were united, in time the prohibitory duties would share the fate of civil disabilities on account of religion; that it was not necessary for this purpose that the late Ministry should be restored to power, but that the man who surrendered what was deemed an essential bulwark of the constitution to the menaces of the Roman Catholic Association in Ireland, would be sure to yield the fortress of restriction when demanded by the peaceful but powerful voice of the people of England. His Noble Friend gave that notice to Hon. Members opposite, but they did not profit by it—on the contrary, they had gone on supporting Her Majesty's Government, thinking, perhaps, that they would be able, when they thought there was danger, to avoid it. It appeared, however, that that was not the case. He could not suppose that, if it were otherwise, the Right Hon. Gentleman would have refused to take the advice of some of his supporters, and take the opinion of the country on the subject. His friend, the Member for Leitrim, had stated that in his part of Ireland corn was produced as cheaply as possible—that they had the advantage of good markets, and then he asked what use was protection to the farmers of Ireland? Now it struck him that it was of this use to them, that while there was a duty to prevent foreign corn coming into this country when there was not much need of it, or at all events when the prices in this country were not extravagantly high, the Irish producer could send over to this country his surplus produce; but admit grain duty free he would have to contend against that and not be able to make so much of his land as he now did. It had been stated by the Hon. Member for Wiltshire, that if the landlords took the view which he (Lord Worsley) had of this question, they would lie under the imputation

of being actuated by a love of pecuniary gain, and by selfish motives, that he trusted was not the reason why he, and those who agreed with him, held those views. He did not know that he could give a better proof that it was not so with him, than that it was his intention to support the alteration proposed by the Right Hon. Baronet in timber. It might be supposed that the question of timber did not affect the landlords; but he was prepared to shew that it affected the landlord, when it did not affect the tenants. So far as protection went, the tenants might be better for the introduction of timber at a low rate, but the landlord would suffer. He individually would do so; that was to say, it would be his interest to keep up the price of wood in this country. But he believed that it would be for the benefit of the country generally that timber should be brought in at a lower duty; and, therefore, he agreed to its remission. He was aware that he had wearied the House by reading the extracts which he had done—extracts of a kind never palatable; but he was justified in showing that, at all events, the measure was not considered necessary a short time ago. The fears he entertained as to the effect of a total repeal, he had stated elsewhere; and he believed it was for the interest of this country that this question should be settled (hear). There were only two ways of doing so, either by a vote against any alteration whatever in the Corn Laws, or else settling them altogether. Settle them they could not, by these measures of the Government, because he was satisfied that there would be a hope among the farmers of again getting back those laws. He trusted her Majesty's Government would seriously consider the matter, for there would still remain among the agriculturists a hope of being once more put in the position in which they now were (hear), and the Government like that of the Noble Lord would be found dependent for its support on their opponents (hear). He did not know one thing that tended more to break up the Whig Government than the persevering cry that went through the country from the Carlton Club, that Lord Melbourne and his Noble Friend were kept in power by the support of the Hon. Member for Cork (hear). And, perhaps, they might yet see the day when the Hon. Member for Cork and his friends and supporters would prevent her Majesty's present Government being defeated by their own friends (cheers from the Protection benches).

SIR J. GRAHAM—Sir, I have risen to address you at this time chiefly in consequence of the able and powerful speech of the Hon. Member for Northamptonshire, who addressed the House this evening, and in whose sentiment I most cordially concur, that we ought not to allow this discussion to degenerate into a mere fiscal question (hear). When a great party is on the point of being dissolved, the question, though in itself even insignificant, becomes a great national one (hear). I think that no leader of a great party, such as that which has placed its confidence in my Right Hon. Friend, can be justified for one moment in treating this great occasion, in any other light, except as one of immense national importance, and one that needs the frankest explanation. This is a question that I hope also may not be treated altogether as a question of mere personality (hear). I cannot at all blame my

Noble Friend who has just sat down for the reference he has made to my former declarations on this subject. I admit that the past declarations of opinion made by a member of this House, who either leads, or aspires to lead a party, and declarations made by a first Minister of the Crown, if at variance with the course he now adopts, are subjects not unworthy of reference, and which call for explanation (hear). The Hon. Member for Northamptonshire made a direct appeal to the Government, and challenges us if we had changed our opinions, manfully to own it. I answer that challenge. I do frankly avow my change of opinion, and by that avowal I dispose of all the speeches (loud cheers from the Opposition, with counter-cheers from the Protection benches, rendered inaudible the rest of the sentence). Upon the advice given by the Hon. Member for Nottinghamshire, that if I were prepared to make that avowal it is my duty to do it; I now make the avowal, and I only ask the House to exercise patience, and indulge me while I point to the reasons of that change (hear). And that I may stand in the position of a man worthy of confidence, I will only glance at a few considerations explanatory of the course I now pursue, instead of leaving the matter to rest on the individual honour of the person who makes the avowal. If you look at the tests by which change of opinion must be tried, on the part of a particular member, you will find that the first which should be applied is this—does the change of opinion promote his personal interest? Perhaps, under the circumstances, I may be allowed to glance at my personal position. All that I possess is as a landlord. I have nothing to hope for except from the possession of landed property (hear, hear). I have inherited by that property a large tract of land of inferior soil; and I congratulate myself that, by my position as a landlord, if the proposed change be dangerous, it exposes me to as great risks as any landed proprietor in the country (hear). So much with respect to my personal position. Now, as a Minister of the Crown, allow me to ask you to apply a test equally conclusive. Does a change of opinion on the part of a Minister of the Crown increase his strength or consolidate his power? Can there be a doubt, after the unhappy scene which we have witnessed during the two last evenings in the conduct of the debate on this side of the House, that my Right Hon. Friend, before the commencement of this session, being (as is allowed) a leader of great talent, possessing the confidence of a great party, and of powerful and immense influence out of the House, has lost—has, as it is now said, almost dissolved that party, by the conduct which he, from a sense of public duty, has pursued? (cries of “hear, hear”). I will try another test upon that subject, and it shall be the last. Has the Minister, by a change of opinion, acted unfairly towards his political adversaries, and availed himself of that change of opinion to exclude them from office? I think it is not expedient, at this time, to touch further upon that subject; but my Right Hon. Friend, with my entire concurrence, frankly tendered to Her Majesty the office which he held as the head of the Administration. I certainly concurred in that resignation; and I can truly and sincerely say, it was my earnest desire that this measure should have been brought

forward by the Noble Lord opposite, in whose hands I think it would have been more properly placed (hear, hear). I state that unfeignedly and frankly, I thought, after all that has occurred, it would have been better for the public, better for public men (loud cheers). I am stating my sincere opinion—I think it would have been more for the public advantage, and for the credit of public men, if what has been proposed, as it has become our duty now to propose it, had been brought forward by the Noble Lord opposite; and I may say, and I am sure the Noble Lord will bear testimony to the truth of what I am saying, that both in writing and verbally I assured the Noble Lord that if he, as a Minister, brought forward a measure such as was indicated in his letter to his constituents of London, I, as a private member of Parliament would have given to that measure my frank and cordial support (cheers). Now having disposed of that which more personally related to myself, I may perhaps be permitted to refer to some of the points touched upon by the Hon. Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. S. O'Brien), and the Noble Lord (Lord Worsley). The Noble Lord asks me—is this measure brought forward merely because we think it expedient? He appeared to doubt whether we thought it right. I say that we bring forward this measure, not because we think it expedient, but because we think it right, and because we think it necessary (hear, hear). Then the Noble Lord proceeded to state, that the time had arrived when this question must be settled. I perfectly agree with him, and I join in the alternative he put; he said it could only be settled in one or two ways, either by absolutely refusing to go into committee upon this question, and to entertain any further proposition in relation to agricultural protection, or else that you must proceed as the Government now advises you to proceed, to the total abolition of protection to agriculture (hear, hear). An Hon. Member has put the question as I think, shortly and fairly; he said, the question to be decided is, is the abolition of protective duties adverse to the poor? The Noble Lord the Member for Stamford (the Marquis of Granby), who addressed the House also with great ability, put it in terms equally distinct; he said, the question is, will this alteration in the Corn Laws, not only give cheap bread, but give a greater quantity of cheap bread to the working classes? I must say that this is the issue which I think we have to try—this is the great question we have to determine (hear, hear). The Hon. Member for Northamptonshire addressed the House with so much ability, that I really was surprised to hear him, even in a passing sentence, speak contemptuously of political economy; he said that the object of political economy, in his opinion, was the accumulation of wealth. I had always understood that the great object of political economy was the distribution of wealth. (Mr. S. O'Brien,—“I said the distribution of wealth,”)—will the Hon. Member allow me:—in my humble view the great object of political economy is not the accumulation, but the distribution of wealth, and the application of capital to industry on principles which science and experience shall have proved to be conducive to the happiness and welfare of the greatest number (hear, hear). The question, then, which we have to determine is, is the maintenance of the existing Corn Laws conducive to

the interests of the greatest number of the community? Will it insure them an ample supply of food of the cheapest and best kind? (hear, hear). The Noble Lord who has just sat down, rather apologized for reading extracts from speeches, because he thought they were not very palatable to the House; I must say, that the extracts he read appeared to me by no means unpalatable (laughter). Will he allow me also, in perfect fairness, to read just two extracts? The Noble Lord imputed to my Right Hon. Friend that not intentionally, but without intention, what had fallen from him on former occasions, had by no means prepared the House or the public for the course which he now takes, and he referred particularly to a speech made by my Right Hon. Friend in 1839. Allow me to read a short extract from that very speech. My Right Hon. Friend, then a leader in Opposition, and a candidate for power, said—"I consider this statement, that the condition of the labourer has been rendered worse by the operation of the Corn Law, a most important one; and I have no hesitation in saying that, unless the existence of the Corn Law can be shown to be consistent, not only with the prosperity of agriculture and the maintenance of the landlord's interest, but also in the maintenance of the general interests of the country, and especially with the improvement of the condition of the labouring class, the Corn Law is practically at an end." That was the declaration of my Right Hon. Friend, as early as the year 1839 (hear, hear). It may seem presumptuous in me to refer, in addressing the House, to what has fallen from myself in a former debate, but after what my Noble Friend has stated, perhaps in fairness the House will not refuse me permission to do so (hear, hear). On the occasion when the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers) moved for going into Committee on the Corn Laws in June last, I said—"It is decidedly my opinion that the prosperity of agriculture must always depend on the prosperity of the other branches of the native industry of this country, and that the public prosperity is on the whole best promoted by giving a fair and uninterrupted current to the natural flow of national industry. I will go further and say, that it is my opinion that, by safe, gradual, and cautious measures, it is expedient to bring our laws, with reference to the trade in corn, into a nearer relation with the sound principles which regulate our commercial policy with respect to every other branch of industry. I will go still further, and say I am not satisfied with the plan, and can be no party to it, of setting up a separate interest for the landlord and the farmer of this country; I believe that their prosperity will, in the main, be found to depend on the wealth, the comfort, and the ease of the great body of the people of this country." Those were the principles which I avowed on that occasion (hear, hear). The House, I think, will also remember the memorable motion of the Noble Lord opposite, on the condition of the working classes. I then stated to the House many facts which had come before me, which were, in my opinion, quite conclusive to prove that the comfort and well-being of the working classes in this country were mainly dependent upon abundance and cheapness, and their misery and distress were mainly occasioned by scarcity or by high prices (hear, hear). I frankly avow, that if the course of

events had not been interrupted by circumstances which it was impossible to foresee, I should very gladly have adhered to the policy of gradually and progressively diminishing the protection to agriculture, but steadily keeping in view that desirable period when the protection might altogether be removed. But this brings me to the point of the utmost importance to the consideration of this case, namely, the unforeseen circumstances which did occur after the termination of the last session. First, with respect to the harvest of this country. It was a harvest, as was truly stated by my Right Hon. Friend the Secretary at War, of a peculiar character. In point of quantity it was not a deficient harvest; in point of quality, I believe, in the experience of the oldest farmers, there never was so great a variety; and the effect of that has been to point out and to establish the great imperfection of the averages under the existing law. I will not press this further. It was distinctly stated last night by my Right Hon. Friend, that in no former years, I believe, has there been such a variety of quality in the corn brought to market, the price varying from 40s. for the worst, I believe, up to 70s., or 75s., for the best. An alteration was made in the law in 1842, in regard to the averages, which had a very decisive effect in one respect; it altogether prevented fraud. By extending the period, and multiplying the towns, in respect to the taking of the averages, fraud was prevented; but as relates to the interest of the consumer, this had a very adverse effect; for fraud, whenever it had been exerted, was always in favour of the consumer, and for the purpose of opening the ports; and in my real opinion, the general defect of the measure of 1842, though it was not so intended, was that it rendered protection more stringent (hear, hear). This was demonstrated, I must say, by the operation of the scale regulating the duties in the course of last autumn. Prices were rising; the price of the quartern loaf in this metropolis was 9½d., and approaching to the war price. When the quartern loaf had so risen, the duty indicated by the sliding scale was 14s. or 15s. per quarter (hear, hear). In point of fact, the sliding scale would neither slide nor move (cheers). And that was its condemnation (renewed cheers). I do not wish to go into an historical statement respecting the Corn Laws, or I might mention that from 1773 to 1792 the importation of corn was in point of fact free in this country; and it was a remarkable coincidence, which Adam Smith points out when, without marking the cause, he mentions as a time when there was a great start in our manufacturing and commercial prosperity—exactly that period, from 1773 to 1792, when the importation of corn was free (hear, hear). I will also observe that really change on this matter was not a change of any fundamental principle. The Corn Law had been changed and altered five or six times, and yet its avowed object had never been answered (hear, hear). I will now return to the point from which I digressed. I was speaking of the imperfect operation of the sliding scale, and I may add, that together with that, there did arise that which human foresight could not anticipate, the general failure of the potato crop throughout the United Kingdom. This failure was by no means limited to Ireland. The destruction

of the potato crop began in the south of England, and I believe that it was more fatal in the southern part of England than in any part of Ireland. In many parts of the southern counties of England the working population, though not altogether subsisting on potatoes, yet are in a great measure dependent on that article for their daily food. With respect to Scotland, we have the most accurate information; and from the parochial returns, we know positively, that in the south of Scotland one-third of the potato crop was destroyed as early as the month of November last. I will not go through all the precise details as to the extent of the failure crop in Ireland. Suffice it to say, that in November the Government received the report of Messrs. Lindley and Playfair, by which it appeared that one-half of the whole crop, though not greater than an average, had been destroyed; that one-eighth of that crop must be preserved for seed; and that, consequently, not more than three-eighths of the whole crop remained at that time for the consumption of the year in Ireland. I had been at that time resident in the north of England, and had almost daily communications in writing with my Right Hon. Friend at the head of the Government; and it did appear to me that this matter of coming scarcity, if not of famine, to be apprehended in Ireland, did have an immediate and indissoluble connexion with this question of the Corn Laws. The Noble Lord the Member for Liverpool said last night, that he could not see that connexion; and the Hon. Member for Northamptonshire, following the same track, has also said, that he did not see the intimate connexion between the two questions. Will the House, then, allow me to state what was the effect produced upon my mind by this inevitably coming scarcity in Ireland (hear)? I foresaw, and I am afraid rightly, that it would be indispensably necessary to give to the suffering community in Ireland aid from the public purse of this country to meet this great calamity. Already some advance of the public money has been asked for, and I am afraid that further advances may still be necessary. Then this great question presents itself—Can in fairness any Minister of the Crown propose to the people of Great Britain to take out of the taxes of Great Britain, public money to aid in the sustenance of their fellow countrymen in Ireland, while artificially, by laws so designed, the price of the food of the people of Great Britain is enhanced (hear, hear)? Other persons may be bold enough to make such a proposition; but I confess that no power on earth should have induced me to be responsible for such a proposal (hear, hear). I told my Right Hon. Friend, that if such a course should be necessary, I strongly advised the suspension of the existing law (“hear, hear,” from the Protectionist benches), and that suspension I find is now generally approved of on this side of the House (hear, hear). The humane, the generous feelings of the landlords of England could not tolerate for a moment that distress, such as that likely to visit Ireland, should not be met (hear, hear). But to give this aid to the Irish people, and at the same time to enhance the price of the food of the great community who contribute towards the taxes of England, and who by their hard industry are only able to pay those taxes, living in some instances on potatoes—is a proposition which I never could have maintained as a Minister (hear, hear).

But it has been intimated that, under these circumstances, Hon. Members generally on this side of the House would be glad to open the ports. Then arises the question—if you once suspend the present law, what is the proposition which, at the termination of that suspension, is to be made? I have told you that I am satisfied, that even when scarcity has arisen, when the price of the quartern loaf was high, and when high prices ought to have been counteracted by the self-operation of the scale, that scale does not operate. I have told you that I thought the present an unsatisfactory law, and according to my opinion, I could not, after its suspension, have supported its re-imposition. I have always stated that my objections to a fixed duty as a fiscal duty are insuperable; because I think that whenever the duty should be high, it would be impossible to exact it; and whenever the duty should be low, it failed for the purposes of protection, and the agricultural interest would then incur all the obloquy of maintaining protection without deriving any advantages from it. We might have proposed some small remnant of the sliding scale, and such a reduction of protection, which it would have been unworthy of the agricultural interest to accept, and still more unworthy of the Government to offer. Under these circumstances the abolition of the Corn Laws was inevitable on its suspension. It was, as it appeared to me, absolutely necessary to suspend the operation of the law; and I foresaw the necessity, if you suspended the law, of its abolition; and I again repeat that, in my humble view, our duty was, charged as we were with the responsibility of office, to meet this immediate necessity and to suspend the law. Nothing could have more gratified me than to see the general arrangements of this question respecting the Corn Law conducted by the Noble Lord opposite (hear). The question has been asked, “Have you any reason, since 1842, for changing your opinion?” I say, that since 1842 those who were charged with the administration of affairs, and who had watched the various circumstances which have occurred, have had experience, not to be mistaken, leading to conclusive consequences. We had, first of all, the painful and lamentable experience of 1842 itself, a year of the greatest distress, and, since it has passed, I may say, of the utmost danger (hear, hear). What were the circumstances of 1842? Allow me just to glance at them. We had in this metropolis, at midnight, Chartist meetings, assembled in Lincoln’s-inn-fields. Almost for nearly three weeks there were assembled in all the environs of this metropolis immense masses of people greatly discontented, and acting in a spirit dangerous to the public peace. What was the condition of Lancashire, the seat of our great staple manufacture, depending for its prosperity on uninterrupted tranquillity and labour? Such was the madness of the people on that occasion, that a great combination existed to stop machinery, and to put an end to the source of the labour on which they depended for subsistence (hear, hear, hear). What was the duty of Government under these circumstances? It was my painful duty to consult with the Horse Guards as to the precautions that were necessary for the maintenance of the public peace; a large force was marched to Manchester, and the troops were actually called on to enforce public tranquillity. I

can safely say, that for three months, the anxiety which I and my colleagues experienced with reference to the public peace, was greater than we ever felt before, with reference to public concerns (hear, hear). Those were the days of high prices and scarcity (hear, hear). I am certain from what I have since observed, that that turbulent disposition, — that dangerous disposition, — mainly arose from the want of adequate sustenance, combined with low wages (loud cheers). What has been my experience for the last two years? I don't take credit to her Majesty's Government for the altered circumstances. Our measures may or may not have conduced to that great end; but by the bounty of Providence we have had abundant harvests; with abundant harvests we have had cheapness and full employment; and what has occurred? I can safely say that for the last twelve months I have not had a single interview with one of the Commissioners of Police with respect to the maintenance of the peace of this metropolis; I do not believe, that for the last twelve months, I have had one interview with the Horse Guards with respect to the movement of troops for the maintenance of the peace of this country (hear). Perfect tranquillity, comparative happiness prevailed; and that is a contrast between scarcity with discontent, and plenty with social comfort, more striking than any I ever before witnessed (loud cheers). I will not trouble you with many statistics. The document I am about to read is short, but still, as an analysis with reference to crime, it is pregnant with instruction. I have taken the six counties which may be said to be the seat of our manufacturing industry; I have taken the county of York, the county of Lancaster, the county of Warwick, the county of Gloucester, Cheshire, and Staffordshire, and have compared the commitments for trial in these counties in 1840, '41, and '42, when the prices of wheat were 66s. 4d., 64s. 6d., 57s. 3d., with those which took place in 1843, '44, and '45, when the price of wheat was about 50s. Now, observe, in Yorkshire the committals were, in 1840, 1,867; 1841, 1,895; 1842, 2,598. The scarcity then ceased, abundance with low prices begins; and we have committed for trial in 1843, 2,304; 1844, 1,691; 1845, 1,417; showing a decrease of commitments in the last as compared with the previous period of these years of 14.9 per cent. In Lancashire the commitments in those years were respectively, 3,506, 3,987, 4,497, 3,677, 2,893, 2,852, exhibiting a diminution of 21.4 per cent. In Warwickshire the commitments were, 1,001, 1,046, 1,003, 1,045, 894, 769, a decrease of 11.2 per cent. In Gloucestershire, including Bristol, the numbers were, 1,045, 1,236, 1,252, 1,186, 1,071, 929, showing a decrease of 9.8 per cent. In Cheshire the commitments were, 1,042, 943, 1,086, 1,018, 777, 688, a decrease of 19.1 per cent. In Staffordshire the numbers were, 923, 1,059, 1,485, 1,175, 885, 717, a decrease of 19.9 per cent.; exhibiting an aggregate decrease of 17 per cent. (loud cheers). Upon the whole of these six counties, comparing the years 1842 and 1845, there is a diminution on the aggregate of 18 per cent. I am convinced with the Right Hon. Baronet, the head of the Government, that it is a fallacy to contend that wages fall with falling prices, and rise with rising prices (hear, hear). It was my Noble Friend the Member for Liverpool, I think, who last night

contended that it was true in the agricultural districts that wages did rise with rising prices ; but he admitted that the proportion was not always equal. Now I beg you to observe, that to the labouring man the equal proportion between the price of food and the rise of wages is a matter of life and death. But it was necessary to observe that the proportion should be concurrent as well as equal. If the rise in wages should lag behind the rise of prices life itself might be in danger. But I have the experience of Sir John Walsham, who long had the charge of the districts of Norfolk and Suffolk, himself an extensive landed proprietor in the county of Hereford, and who, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, assisted the Poor Law Commissioners, and he tells me that he has never known that wages have risen beyond from 8s. to 10s. and 11s. in certain counties, and from 9s. to 13s. in other counties ; the utmost rise being 25 per cent. ; while he has seen at the same time the price of corn rise from 45s. to 90s. It is unnecessary to say, in reference to this point, that the rise of wages in those districts is not at all commensurate with the rise in the article of first necessity (hear, hear). But, as truly stated by my Right Hon. Friend the Secretary at War, whatever may be the case in the agricultural districts, the converse of the assertion is true with respect to the manufacturing districts. Invariably in the manufacturing districts you will find low prices accompanied by high wages, and high prices by low wages. I mentioned some circumstances which occurred in the month of November with reference to Ireland ; but I have not the whole of the case with respect to that time. From a report which I have received from Mr. Sanders with respect to the West Riding of Yorkshire, I find that at that time there was not merely a rise in prices, but a strong apprehension of still higher prices in several parts of the West Riding, particularly in Bradford, and that several works were put on short time. In several of the cotton districts, also, I learn the mills were about to be put on short time. When, therefore, we looked to the circumstances of the whole country in the months of November and December, we had no option left, as the general guardians of the condition of the great body of the community, but to pursue the course which we have pursued. We have been told of the danger of being dependent on foreign states for the supply of food ; but when we consider that the population of Great Britain in 1815 was 18,000,000, and that at the present moment it is 23,000,000, it seems to me that the time has arrived when it may well become a question, not whether Great Britain can alone supply the amount of food necessary for the population, but whether it will not be difficult at a moderate price to secure food for the whole of that population, even with the aid of foreign countries (loud cries of "hear, hear"). For myself, I have no apprehension of any great fall of prices from the abolition of the Corn Laws, I think that both the hopes and fears of many people on the subject are greatly exaggerated. I do not believe that the abolition of protection, as matters now stand, will materially lower the price of corn ; but I consider that to the great body of consumers it will be a security of inestimable value against high prices when the harvest happens to be deficient in this country. That is my view with regard to supply. With regard to the

commercial principle there can be no doubt whatever. The Hon. Member for Northamptonshire described a state of things where a certain individual has the walls of his house covered with French paper-hangings, furnished with articles of German hardware, and who rides in a Brussels carriage, while workmen are crowding the market with nobody to hire them. How does the Hon. Gentleman think those carriages are to be obtained? Whatever may be the form of the transaction by which they are obtained, that transaction of necessity resolved itself into a bargain. Directly or indirectly there must be an exchange of commodities, and you must in the long run export some of your own home productions to pay for what you have got from abroad. I am quite satisfied, if you extend the sphere of your commerce and do not attempt by fits and starts to force its expansion, that the prosperity of all classes will steadily advance with the increase of your exports. The Hon. Member for Northampton (Mr. S. O'Brien) referred to the case of a farmer, whom he described in the most pathetic terms, for the purpose of illustrating the consequences which the Hon. Gentleman presumes will flow from the measures of Her Majesty's Ministers. But another picture was given last night by the Noble Lord the Member for Liverpool (Lord Sandon). The Hon. Gentleman represented his farmer as petitioning his landlord in vain for a reduction of rent. The Noble Lord considered the condition of the farmer as peculiarly helpless and exposed. He said this unhappy man had constantly had held out to him the expectation of prices which he had never realized—prices which were made the basis of calculation when he agreed to pay a fixed rent; then he comes to the landlord with "hated breath" and most humble demeanour, seeking an abatement of rent. The landlord grants somewhat less than the farmer requires; an abatement of ten per cent. is found quite inadequate; and at last the farmer is forced to take refuge from all his difficulties in some lower occupation. Such are the results as described most accurately by the Noble Lord himself, of this system of protection and of disappointment (cheers). The abundant crop, the diminished protection, and the fixed rent, have been a failure ("no, no," and "hear, hear"). From the very spot where the Hon. Gentleman stood when he addressed the House I heard such a representation given of the condition of the farmer; and I am quite satisfied that the great bulk of that class are more likely to be injured by the continuance of the existing law than by its repeal. I have no apprehensions whatever that the abolition of that law will render this country dependent upon any foreign country. But, as a landlord—and on this point I agree with the Noble Lord the member for Lincolnshire—I am certain that the settlement of this question is with reference to the interests of landlords of paramount importance (cheers). How can we have a settlement? with the feeling of the great bulk of the community on the subject as at present, there is but one settlement (cheers). There are various classes whose interests are involved in this question, and their views have undergone a change on the principle of protection. I will not dwell upon the meeting in Wiltshire. It may have been suggested, but still that meeting is a remarkable fact. I pass,

however, from that, and appeal to every gentleman in this House who has had opportunities of observation, whether he can contradict me when I assert that till lately the opinion prevalent among operatives was, that low prices would invariably lead to low wages. I say they have changed their opinions (cheers). The experience of the last three years has not been thrown away upon them; and if that be so—if the masters and the men are quite of one mind on this point, they will settle—and I may tell the Hon. Member for Knaresborough so—they will easily and amicably settle those questions which are likely to arise between parties placed in such a relation to each other. I can very well understand how those working men should overtax their industry, and even call on their wives and daughters to work, that they may obtain subsistence. Necessity might drive them to such resources. But if they can understand that by a change of your law they may be able, without working so long themselves, without requiring their wives or daughters to work as they do now, to live in greater comfort than they have ever known, I have not the smallest doubt that arrangements will be made between masters and men as to the period of labour, and so every ground or pretext for legislative interference will be taken away (cheers). It will, I should say, be one of the most pleasant and happy days that ever occurred in England, when, on account of an alteration in your law rendering a shorter time necessary to procure wages adequate to purchase the comforts of life—it will, I repeat, be one of the happiest days of England when, on account of such an alteration, the masters and the men shall without legislative interference, come to an agreement on that subject (cheers). I am glad to see that the Noble Lord the Member for the West Riding of Yorkshire (Lord Morpeth)—with whom I have often differed, but whose absence from this House I never ceased to regret—expressed on the hustings sentiments closely akin to those I have endeavoured to convey (cheers). As to the agricultural interest—the interest with which I am myself connected—I would say, let us have certainty with reference to the value of our land. That certainty you will have as far as it can possibly be given, from a change in the law. But in addition to certainty you will have peaceful enjoyment. You will have that peaceful enjoyment without exciting the jealousy of your poorer neighbour. And I do not think that Landlords will have to make any very great sacrifices; but entertaining the opinions which I do, founded on the experience I now possess, I say, were the sacrifice ten times greater, I for one, sooner than that it should be said of myself, or any of the class to which I belong, that our object was to secure for ourselves an increase of rent, and not to promote the welfare and happiness of the great body of the community—sooner than leave any room for such a suspicion, I should say, speaking for myself, that would I descend to a lower estate, and abrogate my inheritance (cheers.) It is said a great party has been dissolved. It is said old political ties have been severed. It has been said that social relations have been disturbed. It is anticipated, and it is probable, that an Administration may be dissolved (cheers). And, though I should regret the former part of those consequences, on my conscience I believe this

proposition will save a great and powerful nation from anarchy, misery, and ruin. (The Right Hon. Gentleman resumed his seat amidst great cheering.)

Lord CLIVE had been a supporter of the former policy of Her Majesty's Government ; and though his constituents had given him full discretion to follow the course which he thought most advisable with reference to matters brought before the House, yet there were certain great landmarks which he was bound to observe. In his opinion the country ought to have an opportunity of deciding this question. If the proposers of this plan had confidence in themselves—if they did not think their new plan as baseless as the old—let them give the agriculturists of England the solemn satisfaction of believing that they had conceded this question to the wants and interests of their fellow-subjects, and not that it had been forced upon them by the dexterity of two discordant Cabinets (hear, hear). It was a scheme fraught with mischief, and it was because he saw so many evils likely to arise from it that he should record his deliberate and impartial vote for the amendment. He would then have this satisfaction, that when he appeared again before his constituents, they should not be able to greet him with those words which the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government told the Right Hon. Member for Edinburgh that he deserved to have applied to him by his classic constituents,—“*Nusquam tuta fides.*”

Mr. COLQUHOUN moved the adjournment of the debate to Thursday.

#### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12.

The adjourned debate on the question “that the House do resolve itself into committee on the Customs' and Corn Importation Acts,” was commenced by

Mr. COLQUHOUN, who entered into an explanation of his vote in 1838, in support of Mr. Villiers's motion for a committee to inquire into the propriety of repealing the Corn Laws. Sir R. Peel had entirely mistaken both his past and his present opinions. He had never entertained the opinions so consistently entertained by Mr. Villiers ; and he had never passed from them to the doctrines of high protection. He had always considered the question of the Corn Laws a most anxious and perplexing question ; and in 1841, not being in Parliament, and having much leisure time, he had studied it with all the diligence and impartiality he could command. He had come to the conclusion that protection was necessary for the interests of agriculture ; and having come to that conclusion, he had declared himself an advocate for a fixed duty on corn. After the occurrences of the last few months, it seemed probable that his notion of a fixed duty, had it been adopted, would have now been deemed preferable to that of a sliding scale. After applying himself to refute Sir R. Peel's arguments respecting prices and wages, he proceeded to comment on the speech delivered by Sir J. Graham on Tuesday evening. Sir J. Graham had then disposed very summarily of all his former arguments on the subject ; and had said that as he confessed that he had changed his opinions, there was an end of his former reasonings. No, there was not an end of them ; for a statesman who spoke like Sir J. Graham, with eloquence and genius,

ought to recollect that his words were winged shafts which stuck deeply in men's hearts. They had made many converts, and had influenced and were influencing thousands of his fellow-countrymen; and he (Mr. Colquhoun) was of opinion that Sir James's explicit recantation of his immortal words would not convince the country that he could raise wages or exalt the financial condition of the labouring population by his present measures. He was afraid that those measures would bring on the country evils of a kind to which its attention ought to be, yet had not been called. What would be their effects on the colonial interests? The protection on timber and sugar would not long survive the protection on corn; and then the manufacturers of England would find themselves no longer in possession of the advantages which they now possessed in the colonial market. Under such circumstances, what would be the condition of the country if, in addition to a failing harvest, it should have to struggle, as in 1840, against a falling revenue? But what reason was there to induce the House to give its assent to a commercial code which even Mr. Villiers could not recommend to his constituents as a perfect code, as it still enforced protection on silk, on sugar, on timber, on copper, and various other articles? If, then, protection were left on some fabrics, why was all protection to be taken from that manufacture—for corn had been justly called by Lord Egerton a manufacture—which was of all others the most precarious in its course, and the most uncertain in its returns? He regretted that ever since he had taken his seat on the Ministerial bench agricultural protection had never received from Sir R. Peel anything like a sincere defence. Last year Mr. Villiers had called Sir Robert's speech on the Corn Laws a dexterous evasion of the whole question, and had warned the country gentlemen that they would soon be called upon to surrender the protection they enjoyed. He was sorry to observe that on all the great institutions of the country Sir R. Peel followed a similar course of dexterous evasion. He had no antipathy to him, and a very sincere regard for many of his colleagues; but his opposition to Sir R. Peel's Administration would in future be openly avowed and steadily adhered to; for as long as Sir Robert declined discussion on all the great questions which agitated the minds of Englishmen, so long he should not promise him any adhesion, nor repose in him any confidence.

MR. C. WYNNE was sorry that he differed in opinion on this question from his constituents, but was consoled by the reflection that he differed from them on honest and conscientious grounds. There was no portion of our law which reflected so little honour on the wisdom of our ancestors as their commercial regulations. Our statute book was filled with instance after instance of their impolitic interference with matters of trade. So long as there was protection extended to other articles, it would have been unfair to take it altogether from agriculture. But the removal of protection was now no longer brought forward as an insulated measure bearing on one interest alone, but as part of an extensive project which applied to every interest and to every trade in the empire. It had been said, however, that a duty of 10 per cent. was still preserved on several manufactured articles. Undoubtedly it was so; but that duty was

not so much a duty of protection as a duty of revenue. It was impossible to carry out the system of free trade fully ; for the claims of the revenue unfortunately interfered. He trusted that on a future occasion this measure would be carried out to a still greater extent. He should have been better pleased had it been so carried out now ; but he was afraid that such a proposition could not have been made to Parliament with any chance of success at the present moment. He had no apprehension that if we repealed our Corn Laws we should fail of obtaining a supply of corn from foreign nations. So long as they could raise a superabundance of corn, they would be as anxious to sell as we should be to buy it.

Mr. HEATHCOTE did not come forward on this occasion to attack the consistency of others, but to maintain his own. He had resisted a measure similar in principle to the present, when proposed by his own political friends ; and he felt bound to offer the same resistance now, when a measure ten thousand times more mischievous in degree was proposed by his political opponents. He explained at some length the reasons why he considered this measure a rash, ill-timed, and hazardous experiment, and observed that it was not recommended to his mind by being accompanied with changes of opinion hitherto unparalleled in the annals of political tergiversation. They had turned out a Government for proposing a fixed duty of 8s. a quarter on corn ; and they were now themselves proposing a fixed duty of 4s. a quarter, to expire at the end of three years. The compensation which they proposed for the injury which they were thus going to inflict on the agricultural interest was utterly inadequate and disproportionate. Monarchical Europe and Republican America had both their Corn Laws. Why was England to deprive itself of a similar code ? Holland had once made the experiment of abrogating such laws ; but the experiment had altogether failed, and Holland, like ourselves, had now the benefit of a sliding scale. No case of public necessity had been pleaded as a justification of the proposed change. Public opinion was not in favour of it even in the large towns, if any conjecture could be formed from the last elections for Wigan, Birmingham, and Sunderland. Foreign countries had not called upon us to make it, for as we were putting off our armour they were covering themselves with the full panoply of restriction. As to the allegation of famine in Ireland, he believed it to be little better than a mere pretext. Famine might exist in Ireland in the speeches of Cabinet Ministers, and in the paragraphs of newspapers ; but he believed abundance was to be found in its markets. If he was mistaken on that point, he was willing to meet the emergency by an ample grant from the public treasury ; but he was not prepared on account of local distress and temporary mischief to alter entirely the permanent laws of a mighty empire.

Mr. C. W. MARTIN felt compelled, after the observations of the preceding speaker on the political tergiversation which had been displayed on this question, to explain the reasons which had induced him to abandon the opinions which he had formerly entertained on the Corn Laws, and to support the propositions of Sir R. Peel in favour of free trade. He then entered into a review of the circumstances which had occurred in the last autumn, and contended that

there was no ground for supposing that the agricultural interest would suffer injury from the reduced price of corn in consequence of the changes now proposed. The prices of corn in the Channel Islands were not unworthy the attention of the House. There the trade in corn was perfectly free, and yet corn bore a high, and, what was more material, a steady price. Little apprehension was to be entertained for many years to come from those corn-growing countries which it was said would inundate England with grain. He looked forward with confidence to the measures now proposed, and was certain that they would place the agriculture and commerce of the country on a sound and healthy footing.

MR. T. BARING said, that upon this subject and some others he had the misfortune to differ from his Hon. Friends on whose judgment he placed the greatest reliance, for whose integrity and purity he felt the strongest esteem, whose general policy met with his entire approval, whose talents and ability were undoubted, and whose patriotism and stern sense of duty to their country, even when they were following what appeared to him to be a mistaken course, could not be questioned; it was therefore with great pain that he gave his vote in opposition to them that night. He could not change his vote unless he saw strong grounds for changing his opinions (cheers), and with every deference for the Right Hon. Baronet, he was yet obliged to say that the grounds on which he founded his change of policy, and the arguments by which he arrived at his change of opinion, appeared to be totally inconclusive (hear, hear). In those reasons he could find only a justification of using caution, discretion, and care in introducing great changes. He found that this change of policy rested on two grounds, the success which had attended the modification of the commercial system during the last three years, and the other ground was, the danger which would result from the failure of the harvest. Although these reasons might combine to justify some relaxation as a temporary measure, they were inadequate to justify those who had a belief in the propriety of the previous policy in an alteration of their opinions. Even if he could believe that the prosperity of the last three years could be attributed to the relaxation of the tariff, still this would be an argument for a cautious, deliberate, and gradual relaxation, and not for so great a change as was now proposed (cheers). The very argument made use of by the Right Hon. Baronet, with respect to the introduction of foreign cattle, showed the danger which would result from apprehensions that might arise, however ill-founded. And when a reason for the present change was sought in the increased consumption of articles the duty on which was lowered by the tariff, he must be permitted to say that there had been an equal increase in articles the duty on which had not been changed by the tariff; he did not object to those changes in the tariff; he approved of the great majority; but they were carrying the argument in a wrong direction when it was said that the prosperity of the last three years mainly depended on those changes. They were told that the great cheapness of bread had been the cause of this prosperity, but he thought that the prosperity would have been much lessened if there were a less demand for labour; as he thought the

increased prosperity had arisen from the greater demand for labour caused by internal improvements, and from the activity of trade. He believed that the rate of wages was regulated by the supply and demand for labour (cheers from the Opposition benches). There was a high remuneration for labour in America, where food was cheap (cheers from the Opposition benches), and a low remuneration in Poland, where food was cheap (cheers). It appeared, then, that there was no positive connexion between the two; but if they diminished the demand for labour with an increasing population, the result was, that the rate of wages, with the increased competition of labour, must be regulated by the prices of food. He could not bow, therefore, to the opinion that the last three years of prosperity, gratifying as it had been, creditable as it was to her Majesty's Government, and satisfactory as it had been to the country, could justify this great experiment in an agricultural country, which was opening up a future which no one could define. The next ground given for the intended change was the result of the harvest in this country and in America. No one could view the possible calamity in Ireland without sympathy and alarm. It appeared, however, to him that the reports as to the disease in the potato crop might be exaggerated; the growth of potatoes and oats was unusually large, and he had hoped that the supply would be large also; but when her Majesty's Government stated their apprehensions that such a supply could not be relied on, he was sure that they did not overstate the case when they said that they looked to Ireland with apprehension. Still this was a special case, requiring a special remedy; it was not from such accidental circumstances that they ought to make a total change in their system (hear, hear). By this measure, the property and the income of the persons to whom the distressed parties ought to look for employment and benevolence would be reduced. He did regret to hear the Right Hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department say he thought no Minister of the Crown would be justified in affording relief to the starving population of Ireland unless he acceded to a repeal of the Corn Laws. When had this country ever shown itself backward in affording relief? He had heard calumnies against the Saxon name and the Saxon nation, but he had never heard such a calumny as that they would suspend all relief till a great commercial change should be perfected (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet had said it would require a bold man to do it; it would require only a patriotic Minister. If he had made a proposal for relief, without accompanying it with an alteration of the Corn Laws, he would have found a Parliament to back him (cheers). The Noble Lord the Member for the City of London had last session moved for a return of the quantity of corn in bond, and it was shown to be only 450,000 quarters; but, though the stock of bonded corn might be small, our real supply rested on our stacks and granaries (hear, hear); and even if there were alarm because the quantity in bond did not exceed 450,000 quarters, there was this satisfaction, that it had now increased to a million. When, however, alarm was excited, every party was anxious to exaggerate the state of the supply. He believed that the crop of barley and oats was peculiarly abundant. The

Right Hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department made that a crime in the present sliding scale which its proposer looked upon as its great merit—it prevented fraud; and because the present sliding scale did prevent fraud, he believed that the speculators said they must resort to another sliding scale,—to the sliding scale of Ministerial nerve and Ministerial consistency (cheers). Then they were told that the ports of England would be swept to supply foreign states; but though 120,000 quarters had been sent to Belgium and Holland there had been a great addition to our store here. Then they were told also that there would not be a sound potato by Christmas; and that the supply of corn would be diverted to Belgium and Holland, which had been wholly erroneous. It was said also that the whole of the rice purchased at Liverpool at a high price, and the Right Hon. Gentleman would be happy to hear that there had now been a fall of 25 or 30 per cent. No one, however, had attempted to allay the fears that had been excited, and which all had set in motion. That portion of the public press which was against the Government and the Corn Laws—against everybody and everything (laughter), had declared that starvation was at their doors. The Gentlemen of the Anti-Corn Law League made it their theme; and the Noble Lord the Member for London had given a sanction to the alarm, because on the ground of that alarm he had written his letter, to make at once a clean conscience and a united party by confessing his previous errors (cheers). Yet, on reviewing what had taken place, he must think the great want of the country had been the want of a Ministry (hear, hear), and that the most appalling scarcity had been the scarcity of statesmen ready to sit at the same Council table (cheers). He thought the House would recollect that the Right Hon. Baronet in introducing these commercial changes had repeated the question, “Why were they necessary?” and after the manufacturing prosperity of the last nine months had anticipated a change. The Right Hon. Baronet referred to a circular, and he must have relied with confidence on the experience and judgment of the writer; and he read an extract showing the great anxiety which existed at the end of the last year relative to the depression of the trade of Manchester. He would not read the paragraph to which the Right Hon. Baronet had referred, in which the writer said that they had lately experienced a reverse. It was the circular of Messrs. Gibson and Ord, most respectable gentlemen, and was dated the 22nd of January, and he must refer to a paragraph, not read, in which the writers said, that one disturbing cause was the apprehension of a deficient harvest in quantity and quality, which had led to so great an excitement that meetings were held to devise measures of redress, and to petition for the immediate opening of the ports for the free admission of foreign wheat; this had precipitated the railway crisis which all must have foreseen; the effect on their own market was a depreciation of price of 10 or 15 per cent., and the general trade of the country was depressed; just at that time the Ministers resigned and completed the chain of events. He could see no ground either on account of the effect of the present relaxation in the tariff, nor in the present circumstances of the country, to call for

such a sudden and sweeping measure as was now proposed. He would, however, look to the measure itself, to see whether it was applicable to the circumstances of the case. But he was anxious to say that he was not one of those who thought that protection ought to be indiscriminately or permanently applied to all produce. Protection was, like revenue, in itself an evil: it was only justified by necessity, and when that necessity was removed, either by no protection being required, or some compensation being given, protection itself ought not to be maintained. Nor could he agree to the opinion that protection was to be an universal system whilst free trade was desirable in any case. It must be looked at with reference to each individual case. That was his opinion with regard to protection, and also with regard to the Corn Law of 1842. He did not look at that measure as final. He did not believe in finality in any legislation (cheers). But there was an understanding that the law of 1842, if it worked well, would not be changed by its authors (hear, hear). He would not, however, go into details; he would only say that he adhered to the opinion of the Right Hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department in last June, when he said,—“ I will go further and say, that it is my opinion that, by safe, gradual, and cautious measures, it is expedient to bring our laws with reference to the trade in corn into a nearer relation with the sound principles which regulate our commercial policy with respect to every other branch of industry.” In that he entirely concurred; and if they had adopted those cautious measures they would have had his complete support; but he could not understand why it was they should check the improvement that was carried on for the cultivation of land to a very great extent (hear, hear). He was aware that this question stood in a very different position from that in which it was last year; he believed that there were three opinions prevailing in this country on this subject. The agricultural opinion was against the withdrawal of protection; the free traders were for the abolition of all protection; and there was a considerable feeling in the mercantile world for a moderate fixed duty (ironical cheers). It was not for him to offer any observations upon those points, but it appeared to him that if ever there were a time when a compromise appeared desirable, it was this (ironical cheers). If ever there were a time when they could make a satisfactory settlement, it was this (hear, hear). He was engaged in the same occupation as the gentlemen opposite, and his object must be to maintain tranquillity in the country, but he believed, by the course that was now pursued, that confidence in the consistency of those who took part in public affairs, without which no Ministry could long exist (cheers)—without which no party could long prevail, and without which that House would lose public respect—would be very much shaken (hear, hear). At the same time he believed that by some amicable arrangement a settlement might be made that would be satisfactory to all. Was it a politic or statesman-like thing to make great interests like the landed interests of the country have no confidence in any Government? (cheers)—to feel that those interests were jeopardized—that they were betrayed by one party and trampled on by the other? (cheers). Was it a statesman-like thing to see the Right

Hon. Gentleman and the Secretary of State for the throwing the Government from one to the present sliding scale. But he had hoped that some opportunity might—it prevented from this question upon an amicable footing (hear, hear, fraud, he believed that any arbiter who entered that House with a sliding scale, feeling would say that this was a question for compromise—cheers). He felt it his duty not to mark his dissatisfaction with the general policy of the Right Hon. Baronet—not to mark his intention of putting himself into general opposition to the Right Hon. Baronet's Government, but to say that if he gave his adherence to a Government who were supporting the principles of Free Trade, he still thought it necessary to maintain some protection to agriculture (hear, hear).

LORD MORPETH said, Mr. Speaker, if the question had been a less important one, or the moment a less grave one, I might, perhaps, have hesitated at so short a period after I had resumed my seat in this House from presenting myself again to its notice, especially when I rise for the purpose of taking that view of the question which, in my humble judgment, at least, has received nearly all the illustration of which it is capable from everything that the most consummate ability, most industrial research, and most protracted discussion can bring to bear upon it; not to mention the still more useful assistance it has received from official countenance, and many illustrious adhesions. The Hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. T. Baring) was, as we knew before, a friend to Free Trade in the abstract; but I think, from his speech to-night, it would be difficult to discover that he was a supporter of Free Trade, either in the abstract or in detail. He professes, indeed, to be favourably disposed to a gradual and cautious relaxation of restrictive duties, but he has not told us how far he will go, or where he would stop. I imagine that, if there is anything to which that great interest, which has been specially referred to in the course of this debate,—the great agricultural interest of the country, objects more than another,—it is to being made the subject of constant gradual experiments,—to being for ever tampered with, and never let alone (“hear, hear,” from the Protectionist benches). The Hon. Gentleman has told us, that the great want felt during the preceding autumn,—a period the circumstances of which, he has told us, gave rise to the Ministerial proposition,—was the want of a Ministry (“hear, hear,” from the Protectionists). Now, I certainly think that want is most sensibly felt by the great and important party in the state and in the country of which the Hon. Gentleman is an ornament. We hear of that party being backed by the voice of the country; of its contesting successfully every vacant seat—almost every vacant seat (cheers, from the Opposition). But still they seem to be lamentably, as unaccountably, without leaders, and without a head (“No, no,” from Mr. Ferrand). No doubt, when they have displayed their full force of numbers, and when the echo of their opinions is responded to in the country, we shall see a successful and stable Government formed (a laugh), on the principle of undiminished protection to agriculture (“hear,” and laughter). The Honourable Member for Huntingdon has told us that this time would be eminently suited for a compromise. I do not know whether that Honourable

Gentleman comes here intrusted with any message, or as the bearer of any overture for the formation of a Ministry founded on the principle of compromise. If such a compromise is founded on the commercial circular the Honourable Gentleman read, I think it would probably differ very slightly from the proposal of the Right Hon. Baronet (hear, hear); but I apprehend that it will be universally felt in the country, and by the House, that the time for compromise has gone by ("hear" from the Opposition benches). A compromise, indeed, was once offered by the party, or by the leaders of the party, with which I have the pride and satisfaction of acting. The Hon. Gentleman must not forget (I believe he was not in Parliament at the time) that the party who are so glad to hail and cheer him as an honourable auxiliary, summarily rejected that proposition (hear, hear). I feel that the best atonement I can make for offering myself to the attention of the House on this long discussed and wide-stretching question, which has already, as I before said, received almost all the illustration of which it is capable, will be to comprise what I have to say in a very moderate compass, and also to confine my remarks to what may seem more special and peculiar in my own opinions and position with respect to this subject. Since I had the honour of occupying a seat in this House, I have been a traveller on the North American continent; I have, for an uninterrupted period of two years, lived in the heart of a purely agricultural district; and I have lost and regained my seat as the representative of the West Riding of Yorkshire (cheers from the Opposition benches). That last circumstance is naturally the freshest and the uppermost in my own mind, as well as far the weightiest in itself (cheers). I feel that it speaks sufficiently and intelligibly enough; for, brought about as it has been, circumstanced as it has been, timed as it has been, it tells its own moral and its own meaning. If my predecessor in the seat I have now recovered, in the opening debate of the present Parliament hastily adduced his own return as a most significant reply to the inquiry submitted to the country with respect to the budget of 1841, I feel that I may still more triumphantly appeal to my own recovery of that seat as the most significant and signal verdict that could be given upon the measure which now, under happier auspices, has been submitted to the country in the year 1846 (cheers). There is one circumstance which seems to me to require a remark from me with reference to the bearing of the late election in Yorkshire upon the question now before the House. As we all know, the project of the Right Honourable Baronet (Sir Robert Peel) concerns an infinite variety of articles besides corn and provisions. The scheme has justly earned the title of "comprehensive" (hear, hear, and cheers, from the Opposition benches); and it meddles almost as much with manufacture as it does with agriculture. It certainly meddles quite as much with many leading branches of manufacture as with agriculture—at least as much as it can (laughter and cheers). The abolition of protection with regard to manufactures is, like that upon corn, entire, but, unlike that on corn, it is immediate (cheers). I was about to say, that the constituency by whose choice and approval I have been honoured represents, as is well known, a great variety both of manu-

facturing and agricultural pursuits of State. It comprises the largest wool  
 len, the largest worsted, and the present sliding scale of manufacturers in the  
 empire; and it embraces, I believe, it prevents, the largest linen manufacturers  
 in England. It comprises, besides, a very extensive iron and cotton  
 manufacturers. Now, as I have just seen the sliding scale, the withdrawal of protec-  
 tion from the articles manufactured by them is immediate and complete, and with respect to some-  
 thing with the Hon. Member's intent, it is by no means clear that the withdrawal of protection  
 may mention, for instance, that the cutlery of Sheffield—the knives, the scissors, and the razors, for the maintenance to a Government of which that town  
 has acquired such just celebrity—has been frequently imitated on the continent of Europe; that the Sheffield  
 upon the articles, and that, having been a question of some time, I may say, well the Sheffield manu-  
 factory. So also with respect to the article of woollen manufacture called “low cloths.” I am told that this may notice, of woollen manufacture  
 prevails very extensively in the West Riding of Yorkshire of the manufacture, which pre-  
 encounter formidable competition from the low priced manufactures of Belgium. But, however that may be, not one of those interests that the  
 directly affected, some of them liable to injury from the withdrawal of protection—not one of those interests, during the interval of a fortnight which was specially exacted for the consideration of the  
 measure by the friends of protection (hear, hear), nor even under the excitement of some rather vehement appeals, which were made  
 in the principal cities of the district, nor when the representatives of these manufacturing interests were assembled in great numbers  
 before the hustings at Wakefield,—not one of them uttered a single murmur, or a whisper, or a wish for the continuance of protection  
 (hear, hear). “Competition may come,” they said, “but we are prepared to meet it; and”—as I was expressly told—“all we wish for is a fair field and no favour.” Let me ask, then, why that  
 interest which so often plumes itself on being the most important, the most noble, the most English in the country, does not take a  
 leaf out of the book of these begrudged manufacturers, and consent to be no longer the only department of our national industry which  
 scorns fair odds, and would strive to keep its own? But I will put out of consideration for a moment, in looking at the effect which the  
 abolition of protection would have upon the agricultural labourer, that truth which is now universally and not less justly recognised,  
 that the interests of all classes must really be identical (cheers); for this, after all, may only come to a sort of begging the question,  
 when every one may say—“This is for my interest, therefore it is for yours, so let it be done.” It will hardly be disputed that the  
 real interests of agriculture must depend upon the general well-being of the community, and upon the effective demand of the work-  
 ing classes. Now, has not that effective demand always existed in a far greater degree in years when corn was cheap than when corn  
 was dear? (hear, hear). The Hon. Member for Huntingdon says—cheapness of bread will do no good unless you have a good demand for  
 labour; that if you have a small demand for labour you will be worse off, whatever may be the cheapness of bread. But has it not been  
 universally found to be the case in practice, as far as any of our

living memories can bear us out, that with cheapness of bread there has come increasing demand for labour? ("no, no;" "hear, hear"). Hon. Gentlemen on the opposite side, in talking of the "three years' experience" of the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, are apt to say, that the prosperity and the activity of those years are not to be imputed to the working of his tariff (hear, hear, from the Protection benches), but to various other causes, and especially to the activity displayed upon railways (hear, hear); but when was the activity displayed, and so advantageously displayed, upon railways, called forth? Was it in cheap years, or was it in dear years? The Hon. Member for Rutland, in his speech to-night said, that the year 1839 was a year of great prosperity to the manufacturers, and he quoted, I believe, a speech made in this House by the late lamented Member for Kendal, bearing witness to the then existing prosperity of many branches of manufactures; but it must be remembered that the year 1839 was only the beginning of that cycle of dear years which was accompanied with such disastrous effects almost to every branch of employment and industry. What do I find in a statistical report drawn up upon the state of the woollen districts of Yorkshire on that very year, 1839, which we are now told was one of prosperity to the manufacturers of this country? It is said,—“On a careful comparison of the wages in the district in the respective periods of 1833 to 1835, and 1839 to 1841, from the testimony of mill owners and the information of weavers and spinners, the amount of employment was at least two-fifths less than in the average of the preceding cheap period; and combining the two elements of a depreciated rate of wages and diminished amount of employment, it would appear that estimating the fall of wages at 20 per cent., and the diminution of employment at 33, the real deduction in the wages of the operatives is about nine-twentieths, or nearly one-half—a fact which, coupled with the enormous rise in the price of flour and butcher's meat, painfully indicates the privations which the operative class is now enduring.” Why, it is as plain as testimony and experience can make it, that when corn is dear, the effective demand of the working classes—of the agricultural classes themselves, must be proportionably entrenched upon. I want you to put this in the most selfish, most exclusive light you can, and imagine the farmer or the miller saying, “Never mind, let them buy fewer coats, fewer stockings, fewer shoes; let them get fewer bales of wool from Australia or Saxony, fewer bags of cotton from Alabama, even fewer hides from my brother grazier, but to me, the farmer and the miller, they must come for their daily bread; they must bring grist to my mill;” why, then, I say, that not only does it appear that in dear years the active demand of the working classes must be diminished, not only will they be able to buy less, which will tell upon the landowner and the farmer, but also to eat less—which will tell upon themselves (a laugh). But what is the result of this “protection” to the agricultural labourer himself? How is he benefited by the bolstering up of agriculture? What share has he in the *spolia opima* of legislative protection? The Noble Lord who spoke so creditably on the last evening of this debate, advised us to look into our own neighbourhoods if we would judge of the effect of pro-

tection. The Noble Member for Liverpool told us that wages varied with the price of provisions ; but it was proved by the Right Hon. Baronet the Home Secretary, that they never varied in anything like the same proportion, and never rose or fell in proportion to the price of provisions? But in my own neighbourhood and district, in the memory of the living race, wages have never varied at all ; they have always, in Northamptonshire, I am happy to say, been as high as 12s. a-week (hear, hear), and more in harvest. Then if the agricultural labourer receives fixed wages of 12s. a-week, without their ever varying according to the price of corn, does it not follow that when, instead of paying 1s. 8d. for his stone of flour, he has to pay, as he does now, 2s. 6d., then his weekly earnings, his yearly income, his command over the comforts and necessities of life, must be very materially abridged (hear, hear)? At the rate of 12s. a week he earns £31 a year ; and a difference of 10d. in the stone of flour, taking his family at six in number, makes a difference to him of 2s. 6d. a week, a difference of £6 10s. a year—a whole fifth of his income. Now I put it to the House, whether we, the rich men, the gentlemen of two meals, whom the Hon. Member for Northamptonshire instanced (a laugh), should not think a whole fifth of our income a very grievous addition to the income tax (hear, hear)? It must be more so in proportion to the man who, by the sweat of his brow, only earns £31 a year. I have had access to a table—though I fear the time has almost come in the discussion of this question when we should have done with the production of tables and papers,—but I have had access to a paper, drawn up not with a view to the discussion of the Corn Laws, but for statistical inquiry in the small town near which I reside, and this table shows the proportionate expenditure in the article of food in three families,—in a tradesman's family, in a professional man's family, and in a working man's family. I find that there were six persons in each, and when flour of the second quality was 2s. 6d. a stone, the yearly bill of the tradesman's family for flour was £12 13s., being 15 per cent. of his whole expenditure on the year. The annual bill of the professional man's family for flour was £18 8s., being 10 per cent. of his whole expenditure ; while the working man's family, conducted with the greatest regard to economy, was £13 4s., being a per centage, not of 15 per cent., as in the tradesman's family—not of 10 per cent., as in the case of the professional man, but of 48 per cent. (hear). Now, is it not apparent how much more heavily and sorely such a deduction from the amount he has to lay out on his food must press on the labouring man than on the classes immediately above him, and, if on the classes immediately above him, of course in a far greater degree than on the wealthier classes of society (hear, hear). But again, I find that the professional man, living in an economical manner, spends upon every article of food he consumes, taking his whole bill for food in the year, about one-third of his total income ; the food of the tradesman takes about one-half of his total income ; while in the case of the working man it takes three-fourths of his total income. What he actually spends in food is seventy-three per cent., and there only remains to him twenty-seven per cent. of his earnings for the rent of his house, for schooling for his children, and for procuring shoes

and those necessary articles of clothing which he and his family require (hear, hear). And therefore I put it to the House, does not the increase of 2s. 6d. upon his weekly bill for flour strip him of the command of other necessities and luxuries of life, of the means of bettering his condition, and giving his children education? (hear, hear). I have sometimes thought that the whole logic of this question is so compendious in its form, and so self-evident in its bearings, that it has only to be stated, and that a simple syllogism might do the work of both, viz.,—there is not more than a sufficient quantity of food grown in this country for our present supply—I think he will be a hardy man who denies that;—there is an addition it is computed, of 1,000 children a day, or 365,000 a year, to our present population; then I also make bold to assert that there is not, year by year, an addition of 365,000 quarters of wheat to our native-grown produce; then does it not result that it is most important to procure an additional supply from abroad, and that this ought to be obtained at the cheapest rate possible? (hear). I should like to know where is the fallacy in this syllogism—for while I will not impute to the agricultural body that they have a less conscientious sense of duty, or are less accessible to humanity than those that I think take the side of humanity and duty in this matter,—yet I maintain they cannot detect a flaw in this broad chain of facts—the large supply of mouths in this country, the corresponding deficiency of native-grown wheat, and the importance of getting all we can at the cheapest rate from abroad (hear). I say, in spite of their natural impulses and in spite of their early prepossessions, they cannot persevere in this system of restriction without infatuation, and I almost say without cruelty (hear). I do not agree with those who impute it as blame to her Majesty's Government that the operation of the sliding scale powerfully affected the Ministerial nerves, or that they were appalled by the events of last autumn. An Hon. Gentleman has said “how preposterous it is to grant a full remission of the Corn Laws, under the necessity of giving an additional supply of food to Ireland;” and he asks, “has the House ever shown any reluctance to grant relief to Ireland? Whatever its Saxon disposition may be, has it ever shown reluctance to grant the people of Ireland relief?” No, it has not; but I ask is it fair to tax the generosity of England because she shows a readiness to fly to the relief of Ireland? (cheers.) This I hold to be a flagrant contravention of the maxim “be just before you are generous.” Be generous, I say, to the people of Ireland; but be just to the collective community of England (hear). The Hon. Member for Huntingdon says, “You are not to apply a permanent remedy to a temporary evil;” but I say the mischief and the evil that have arisen may arise every year; and are we always to be mocked with this delusion of sliding scales that do not slide, and of restrictive laws that, according to the annual course of the seasons, must be constantly modified or repealed? (hear). It is no reproach to the Right Hon. Gentleman that he has been influenced in the course he has adopted by the state of the seasons. If he did find that his anticipations were deceived, and his calculations baffled by circumstances over which he had control, he might have been ashamed for changing his mind; but can any one be reproached with

being baffled with that which he could neither counteract nor control? (hear). I can see no disparagement of free trade—it is rather a confirmation of the truth and justice of the principles on which it rests—that it does follow the laws of nature, and bends to the rules that guide the seasons in their course (hear, hear). You might justly apply, without exaggeration, to free trade those striking lines that the poet applied to the Roman Emperor who was befriended in the battle-field by the tempest. I shall endeavour to quote my Latin better than the Hon. Member for Newcastle, and I may say that while it is in favour of free trade, aided by the influence of the seasons, sterility only makes such words as these more answerable:—

“ Tibi mittit ab antris  
 “ Æolus armatas hyemes ; tibi militat Œta,  
 “ Et conjurati veniunt ac classica venti.”

It is no discouragement to Free Trade, but rather a confirmation of all that is just in it, that the stars in their courses do not set against it, but in its favour. With respect to this argument of the weather, I believe it has been found by all those who have given their special attention to its variations, that the same circumstances of cold or heat, wet or dry, will be found to prevail very generally over a large portion of the world. If in the wet countries of Europe the produce is affected so as to raise the price of corn, and while bread is dear in London, it will, on the contrary, be compensated for by seasons of an opposite character in other portions of the world, perhaps on the North American continent. Hon. Members will remember that the summer of 1832 was distinguished by a warm and evenly temperature. I was on the continent of North America at that time, when we enjoyed a succession of the most favourable weather; and much as I had heard of the hot summers of America, I never had any proper idea till this of their nature. We also recollect that last autumn we had very damp seasons, and we must have read in the papers every day of the constant heat and fine weather of America, and even read of persons that actually died of the heat; and what is the inference from all this? That the variations of the weather seem to be as constant as light and darkness. So that when any season of a markedly unfavourable character occurs here, when we are assailed with unseasonable cold, and when we are drenched with summer rain, let us take hope in the reflection that if we do but repeal our Corn Laws, if we do but open our ports, the rays which have been denied to us will ripen the distant harvests; and just at the very moment when we want it the superfluity of their crops and the stores of their garners will be wafted to us at once for and to adjust our deficiencies (cheers). But with reference to the continent of America, I do not wish to allude so much to any statistical deductions which my residence there may have encouraged me to make, because they have been the subject of frequent discussion, and may be calculated as easily and appreciated almost as easily at any distance as on the spot; but I confess I have felt sometimes that the real sight, the actual presence, the faithful eyes do drive a truth home nearer to one's conviction than can be done by a laborious process of calculation. I have felt this when before the

actual view of those wide prairies which show by marks on every hand, by their unfenced sides, without an inhabitant, but with an even surface covered with fertile grass, that they are yet destined to invite the plough to enter them. I have felt this when I saw the endless forests which show by the evidence of all that is going on, that as soon as the axe shall ring among them—as soon as the log-cutter shall have his house, and the thin column of smoke shall ascend among the trees, future crops of wheat and maize will speedily spring up and follow each other in due succession. I have felt this when I have been in sight of the valley of the Mississippi, which the accomplished traveller De Tocqueville has described as the most magnificent abode ever formed by nature for the abode of man. I have felt this when I have seen the basin of our own St. Lawrence, which, I believe, contains more fresh water than all the rest of the world besides—I have felt that, while I know the distance of transit would prevent those extraordinary imports which the panics of the protectionists have sometimes conjured up before their eyes,—that as it must still be a long time before this same valley of the Mississippi will contain the 2,000,000,000 of inhabitants for which it is said to be adapted—as it must be some time before the powers of production in that country are reached by the spread of population, it is a pity that we should not make available these unparalleled facilities for the growth and transport of provisions for the supply of our own isle, which is calculated to produce a glut of almost every article except that not unimportant one of food and provisions (hear, hear). But, as I intimated, it is not so much to the statistics as to the social and political impressions which I derived from my visit which I wish for one moment to mention to the House before I cease to trespass on their attention. Much that I witnessed there, much that I heard there, and more that has reached me since, has certainly not tended to give me a very favourable impression of the orderly working, of the pacific and moderate tendency, of the scrupulous adherence to good faith, to be derived from a constitution of pure and unchecked democracy; and I did not return home with any increased repugnance—I mean to say any diminished attachment to the aristocratical and monarchical element in our own constitution (cheers). But both then and since, there and here, I have felt the perfect conviction that we could not confront the example of general ease, comfort, and abundance which pervades the whole bulk of the American people. The Hon. Member for Northamptonshire talked of a man of two meals. This reminds me of the story which is well known, at least on this side of the water, of an Irishman who refused to write home that he had meals three times a-day, because nobody would believe him (laughter). But I say we cannot confront the Americans with that example, and I say there is a growing conviction in the aspiring reasonings of our own people—we cannot confront the master tendencies of the age, the country, and the world at large in which we live, if we do not consent to administer the working out of our aristocratic institutions in rather more of a democratic spirit. Notwithstanding that implied dissent, I contend that no aristocracy resting upon exclusive privileges—which happily ours

does not—can be tolerated for an instant. I contend, further, that no aristocracy which props itself upon special interests will escape its certain downfall; that no aristocracy, not even one so long descended and so highly illustrious as our own, can exist with Corn Laws which when the pressure comes should prove prohibitory (cheers). This will be too hard a strain upon title deeds and parchments—no matter what is their date or their antiquity. I do not impute to the aristocratic body, or agricultural body, or to any of their members, that they have any disposition to promote any selfish interest that may affect them individually, or to espouse measures merely for selfish benefit, at the expense of the rest of the community; still there are interests and associations, not of individuals, but of a class who are in the habit of keeping themselves prominently in the public mind and view; there are concealed sympathies and feelings which belong to what is termed the *esprit de corps*; there is a refined degree of selfishness which almost merges into generosity, and which easily mistakes itself for it; and when we think that a body with whom we have long identified ourselves are likely to be out-numbered, and are liable to be assailed—in these circumstances, even monopoly itself, as it nears its downfall, although it is not entitled to the attribute of self-sacrifice, will be invested with the grace of martyrdom (cheers); just as in the case of a scene on the stage, we are apt to feel sympathy with a culprit who is detected, and who stands at bay. But it cannot promote the general interests of the country or a healthy tone in a system to indulge in a practice of misplaced and morbid sympathy. It is the part of true patriotism, no less than of sound philosophy, to put the universal in preference to the particular—to raise yourself above your own particular class, rather than above the people. I would therefore conjure those who belong to the real aristocracy of the country, who are connected with hereditary associations or landed property, to raise themselves above any of their special interests, and bear their part in the consideration of this great question. I grudge the other side the adherence of the names of the Marquis of Granby and Lord Clive, for I feel an aristocracy have hitherto marched with our whole progress, and identified themselves with the various glories of our national history. Let them not refuse to bear their part in a settlement which, if not adjusted with them, must be adjusted in spite of them (cheers). They may bear their part, and, if they will, a distinguished and prominent part,—I believe they may continue to bear what has, for the most part, been a respected and honoured part in our system of national polity; but this system comprehends, besides themselves, the multiplied energies of trade and industry—the sober-thinking and staid determination of the large middle class—the hard-working industry and urgent privations of the immense working class—the powerful agency of a powerful and enlightened press, and all the busy stirring progress of an advancing age. Let them throw in the lot together; let them consider this and other kindred subjects as a great whole, and make it as much their pride as their safety to be the leaders and not the laggards in the onward march of the whole British people (great applause).

**MR. GASKELL** observed, that in spite of the speeches of Sir J. Graham and Mr. S. Herbert, he had yet to learn what new circumstances had arisen to induce this Parliament, elected on protection pledges, to consent not to a suspension of the Corn Laws, but to a total departure from their general principles. During the last four years he had opposed every motion for the repeal of the Corn Laws under the guidance of those in whom he had hitherto placed confidence. He had always been a friend to a moderate protection to agriculture, and in those opinions he had been confirmed by the authority of Mr. Canning, Mr. Huskisson, Lord Grey, and Sir R. Peel. The force of that authority could not be swept away by a single sentence even of so able a statesman as Sir R. Peel ; and the more he reflected on this subject, the more he was convinced that gentlemen on his side of the House should not propose, and that this Parliament should not sanction, the repeal of the Corn Laws. In the course of his public life Sir R. Peel had made great sacrifices to his sense of public duty but, the first sacrifice which he had made was not so great as his present. By the first he had lost the representation of the University of Oxford ; by the present he had destroyed a noble party which was once his pride. He then expressed the regret with which he had contrasted the votes with the speeches of Lord Sandon and Mr. Baillie. Though he differed from Sir R. Peel with pain, he differed from him without hesitation ; and he should, therefore, with a clear conscience give his vote in favour of the amendment of Mr. Miles.

**MR. ROEBUCK** observed, that when passion had passed away on this question, posterity would wonder how it had contrived to raise such a storm of agitation. He differed from most of the speakers who had preceded him ; for he had nothing to retract—nothing to defend—but everything to assail. He was surprised that the high Tories on the other side of the House should have given encouragement to the notion that a Member ought to resign his seat whenever his opinions were in opposition to those of his constituents ; for that doctrine, which degraded the representative into a mere delegate, was contrary to all their former dogmas on the subject. He also wondered what they would say to those representatives who had resigned their seats, not on the demand of their constituents, but because they were the nominees of certain influential proprietors of close boroughs. He lectured Sir R. Peel and Lord John Russell on their recent change of opinion on the Corn Laws, and observed, that he who gave them credit for sincerity must do so at the expense of their understandings. The real meaning of “ protection ” was that the food of the people should be produced at a higher price at home by certain individuals for their own benefit than that at which it could be procured abroad if the trade were free. It was said that such a system was necessary to promote the agricultural class, which consisted of labourers, farmers, and landlords, all with different, if not conflicting interests. He showed that it was more injurious than beneficial to them all. After a long argument on this subject, he concluded by expressing a hope that the measure of Government would pass, and by recommending the House to accompany it with some measure for the general education of the people. This

measure, if carried, would give a stimulus to the population ; and as the population increased, its condition, unless it were educated, would deteriorate rapidly.

SIR H. DOUGLAS moved the adjournment amid loud cries of "Go on !"

The SPEAKER put the question of the adjournment of the debate, on which

MR. H. HINDE rose to address the House, precluding his observations by saying that, though he represented a constituency entirely commercial, he intended to give his vote in favour of a continuance of protection to agriculture, believing that such a policy was as closely identified with the welfare of manufactures, and with trade generally, as it could be with agriculture itself. He contended that though *ad nauseam* the maxim had been dinned into their ears that Free Trade was common sense, it should be the object of a wise Government, avoiding all such alluring doctrines, to carry out only measures calculated to guard against those inevitable fluctuations to which, from the alternations of the seasons and from other circumstances, native industry, applied to the most important of occupations, agriculture, was exposed. He was further of opinion, notwithstanding the assertions to the contrary on the part of the veteran and the more recent advocates of Free Trade, that to render this country dependent upon foreigners would be to take the surest possible or conceivable means to give a death-blow to its prosperity. He entertained serious apprehensions, founded upon experience, that to throw the carrying trade, which would be the certain effect of the present proposition, if adopted, into the hands of foreign shipowners, would prove the ruin of a great and important branch of English industry. He had voted with the Right Hon. the great gentleman in carrying his Canada Corn Bill, and had only regretted upon it, and was not made applicable to every one of our colonies ; and irreparably and was beginning to flourish, would now be utterly on the conclusion of royed (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet, it he would—would close session, on carrying his measure,—as carry was inevitable, of handing his career as Minister ; for the necessity who had been so long the avow a Free Trade Government to those of Free Trade principles. He vocates, some of them the originators, Lord was as sincere in his des (Mr. Hinde) believed that the Noble Right Hon. Baronet could be ; he to do good to the country as the honesty ; but he believed both were did equal justice to their similar

The motion for adjournment of the adopting mistaken views. was then agreed to.

#### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13.

The adjourned debate was then resumed.

SIR H. DOUGLAS had uniformly voted against the motions which had been made in that House having for their object the Repeal of the Corn Laws and of all the import duties. He found nothing to regret in the course he had pursued ; and it was now his intention to vote against the withdrawal of protection to British agriculture, and against the extinction of protective duties. Whatever other changes

had taken place, his opinions remained unchanged. What he had heard had not shaken but confirmed his views ; and his vote must consist with his opinions. Protection, he contended, was beneficial to all classes ; and it was desirable especially to protect labour, with the view of preventing, as far as possible, the recurrence of severe depression. But when the unprotected industry of the British artizan was brought into competition with the protected industry of foreign states, the effect must be most prejudicial to his interests. The Repeal of the Corn Laws, in like manner, would lead to the displacement of British agricultural productions from the British market. There was a marked distinction between the plenty which arose from an abundant harvest at home, and that which arose from foreign importations. England was England's best customer ; and the recent prosperity was attributable not to the influence of the foreign markets, but to the activity which had prevailed in the home market, and to the late abundant harvests. Perfect Free Trade consisted in the absence of restrictions at home and abroad. In the abstract it might be a good thing ; but practically it did not exist. The measure would destroy the colonial trade, which if properly supported, would afford immeasurable resources to this country. He quoted the authority of Adam Smith, for the fairness of placing a duty on foreign manufactures, which would act as a protection to native industry, and contended that the refusal of foreigners to take our produce would inflict a loss on the British shipowner. With respect to their colonial possessions, he had long thought that freer intercourse with them might be established with advantage. He had supported the Canada Corn Bill readily ; in 1826 he had charge of an extensive emigration to the British North American Colonies, and he then saw the difficulties that a thinly scattered population, exclusively agricultural, must encounter if they became extensive producers without markets for their produce. He thought that a country like Canada should be allowed to send its produce to the West Indies ; but that market was entirely closed to the British North American Colonies. He contended that the Canada Corn Bill was a solemn compact between the Parliament and the Colonial Legislature, and if this measure passed it would be a total abolition of protection, which would not only extinguish the Canada Corn Bill, but the colonial system itself. That system was one of protection ; the abolition of it would convert the colonies into independent states, each managing its own colonial affairs. The ships of England might guard their coasts, and the troops of England command in the interior, but the question would then come, what was the use of the colonies ? From the moment they were permitted to regulate their own commercial affairs, there was an end of the colonial system. He denied that Mr. Huskisson's Colonial Trade Acts were abrogations of the principle of protection ; he found the colonial trade in a state of monopoly, and he opened it to the produce of all friendly states ; but in all the colonies the produce of England had a protection varying from  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to 30 per cent. He would ask what was to become of British India and the many trades flourishing in that colony, but dependent for flourishing upon the maintenance of those laws under which such trades had originated ? Although novelty

might be found in the demand for Free Trade, there was nothing new in the approbation, entertained by the majority of enlightened statesmen, of protection. The Hon. and gallant Member here quoted several long extracts from various speeches delivered in the House of Commons by Mr. Huskisson, from which it appeared that the opinions of that statesman had been to the effect that the cheapness produced by foreign import was a sure forerunner of scarcity, that Free Trade in an extended sense, was impolitic in a country situated as was England with respect to her commerce, and that the past had proved protection to the farmer to be protection to the people, being inseparable from security, not only at home, but in our colonial possessions. He (Sir H. Douglas) apprehended, notwithstanding the desire that foreign nations at that moment evinced to maintain with us all the relations of peace, that war would no sooner be declared than every advantage would be taken by them of the defenceless state in which the measure of the Right Hon. Baronet would leave the country (hear, hear). Believing the honesty of intention on the part of the Government to be undoubted, he should be glad to find hereafter that the views he (Sir H. Douglas) now expressed were erroneous; but, having convictions to the contrary, he felt himself called upon to vote against the perilous—the unnecessary experiment proposed.

VISCOUNT VILLIERS regretted that, in voting on the present occasion with the Government, he would be differing with many of those friends with whom in political connexions he had so long been associated. In the course he was taking, however, he was actuated only by a desire to see such a policy adopted as would most speedily conduce to the general welfare of the community. When recently the consideration of the subject had been brought before the House, he had confessed himself in favour of protection: but it had been in favour of a protection which should be placed upon such a basis as would give no partiality, would enable capital to flourish in its legitimate channels, and would effect those improvements in agricultural prosperity which, on all hands, were allowed to be so desirable. But he now wished to ask any gentleman in the House, whether it could be pretended that protection was placed upon those terms? Were not all aware that that protection must always be the object of contention and the cause of mischief? or could he seek, conscientiously, to maintain the assertion that such a state of things was favourable to those for whom protection was demanded, either to the farmer or the agricultural labourer (“hear, hear,” from the Opposition benches)? He felt himself also bound to say that, whatever opinions he had entertained, the experience of the last three or four years had brought home to him facts beyond controversy or denial. One fact was, that the reductions of the duties on agricultural produce had not produced high prices; and a second fact was, that a reduction in other duties did not imply any falling off in the revenue of the country (“hear, hear,” from the Opposition benches). The result had been the reverse, for, by such a policy, the nation, from a gloomy and depressed state, had, in five years, recovered, nay, added to all its former prosperity, and in proportion to the reduction of the duties, it had been found, was the increase in the revenue (“hear, hear,”

from the Opposition benches). With these considerations before his eyes,—with that knowledge of what had happened,—and with the anticipations, derived from that experience, of what was to come from a further development of the like legislation,—was he justified in risking the welfare of the people on the issue of a struggle entered into in the hope of maintaining agricultural protection? He considered that he was best discharging his duty, and best defending his own consistency, in doing only what he believed best—by voting with the Government; and he trusted that from the final settlement of the question now about to take place, the whole empire and the whole world would derive advantage (cheers).

MR. F. SCOTT described the stunning effect produced on his mind by the sudden desertion of all his former principles and pledges by Sir R. Peel, and the pain and reluctance with which he now came forward to give the most decided opposition to his new commercial plans. He would not ransack *Hansard* to point out the inconsistency between the past and present speeches of Sir R. Peel and his colleagues; he would confine himself to contrasting the various and contradictory statements which they had made in their speeches during the last three weeks, in order to show the shifts to which men were driven when they brought forward measures for which there was no sound justification. The Hon. Gentleman then amused the House by reading a curious series of contradictions which he had detected in the speeches of Sir R. Peel, Sir J. Graham, and Mr. S. Herbert, delivered between the 26th of January, and the 9th of February, 1846. Those contradictions were proofs of the difficulties in which great men were plunged when they abandoned principle, and entered upon a crooked and devious course of policy. He called upon the House to consider what the feelings of the party with which he was connected must be towards Sir R. Peel, by reflecting upon the terror and alarm which had seized a friend of his, who having tried an action in the provinces, and having then argued the merits of it in Westminster Hall, and having afterwards removed it to the court of last resort—the House of Lords—found that his leading counsel—the very man who had supported his claims in every previous stage of the cause—had not only thrown up his brief, but had actually taken one from his adversary. His friend had then applied to the King's counsel, and to the junior counsel, whom he had formerly employed, in the hope that they would have no scruple to undertake the cause. But no—they refused—for they said that it was their duty to follow their leader. Noticing the assertion that this project was wide and bold and comprehensive, he expressed a doubt whether it would be as wise as it was wide, as politic as it was bold, as successful as it was comprehensive. He considered that it would be “a heavy blow and severe discouragement” to agriculture—that it would diminish our command over the necessities of life—that it would drive bullion out of the country for the purchase of grain—that it would increase grievously the fluctuations of its price—and that it would diminish the supply of food for our labouring population. Whilst he was proceeding in his denunciations of the measure

SIR R. PEEL asked Mr. SCOTT for whom was he retained?

MR. F. SCOTT (apparently bursting with indignation)—For whom

am I retained? Who am I counsel for? I am counsel for no man, no party, and no sect. I was proud to follow the party of the constitution when the Right Hon. Baronet hoisted the banner of it; but now that he fights under a different flag, I am left to myself, and must act according to the dictates of my own conscience and my own judgment. The Hon. Gentleman after apologizing for the warmth into which he had been betrayed, delivered a long invective against free trade, which he described as sense in the abstract and nonsense in the reality, and as a fantastic cobweb sparkling like a dewdrop in the sun. With our taxation it was impossible. With our debt of £800,000,000, we had no more right to call upon this country to enter into competition with countries comparatively untaxed than we had to ask a man with a hundredweight on his back to enter into the lists with an opponent perfectly unencumbered. Besides, the appearance of the political atmosphere in the East, and still more in the West, was not such as to encourage us to make at present the rash and perilous experiment which was now recommended—an experiment which, he contended, would produce the loss of Canada, and all our other colonies. He concluded with a long and declamatory philippic against Her Majesty's Ministers, who, with free trade on their lips but not in their hearts, were now venturing upon a grinding, bone-crushing experiment, which would consign not only all the agricultural labourers, but all the other industrious artisans of the kingdom also, to one unsparing and indiscriminating ruin.

MR. WARD said that the Hon. Member who had just addressed the House was a speaker whom it was very difficult to follow. He was difficult only in one sense,—and the difficulty arose chiefly from the variety of topics which his speech embraced. The Hon. Gentleman announced himself as counsel for the whole British Empire, but the course of his speech seemed to carry him all over the world. The speech just delivered was filled with complaints of the measures of the last three years, and up to the last three months the Hon. Member himself had supported every one of those measures. Then he told the House that the matter of free trade was a question of degree, and almost in the same breath he informed them that it struck a blow at the heart of the constitution. Looking, then, at the way in which one part of the Hon. Member's speech answered another, it might well be inquired what gave him a right to take offence when asked for which party he was retained; and what right had he to apply the remark to Ministers, that public men had great difficulties to encounter when they took a devious course? Surely for a long time past the present Ministers of the Crown had been taking a most direct course. No one who had sat opposite to the Right Hon. Baronet and had seen the progress he had made in the adoption of the principles of his opponents, could have doubted that he must in the end have come to the same conclusions with them; and those who supported him in the year 1842, had no right to turn round upon and to condemn him for results which they had rendered irresistible. What did they do in 1842? They were a great party, they had an unassailable majority in that House (cheers), they had the game in their own hands, there had been an appeal to the country on the question of protection to native industry (hear, hear), they

had beaten their opponents. What was the first step taken? Concession was made; with all the responsibilities of power the Right Hon. Baronet yielded to what he now called the force of reason and of truth, as he only now yielded because it was reason and it was truth. After the admission of the principle, the only question was one of degree—where they should stop. In dealing with the tariff, how did the Hon. Gentlemen deal with those interests with which they had been connected in 1841, with which they had so recently entered into a holy alliance? They sacrificed them. Now, Hon. Gentlemen opposite found themselves placed in a position of denouncing as absolute treachery to their party the step taken by the Government, which was the inevitable result of Hon. Gentlemen's own former opinions; and the champions and advocates of protection now were forced to admit that they only differed from the Right Hon. Baronet because he went further than they wished. The Hon. Gentleman who last spoke admitted that legislation must be progressive, that the laws of this country were not immutable, but that he would rather have changes introduced at the desire of the landlords than on the demand of the people. Now, the country had waited quite long enough for the landlord's desire, it was time to listen to the demands of the people (hear). The Hon. Gentleman complained that a tax upon grain was liable to be confounded with a bread tax; but he did not show how it was possible to separate them. The Hon. Gentleman told them also that protection was not required for the interests of agriculture in the part of Scotland with which he was connected; he talked of the disadvantages of hilly roads, and of the want of markets and manure, and though he talked of the demoralizing effects of the Ministerial measures, yet he had told them that cultivation could still be profitably carried on. He must next go back to the speech of the Hon. and gallant Member for Liverpool (Sir H. Douglas) who, he regretted to find, had left the House; though he must have expected that some remarks would have been made upon what he had stated. The Hon. and gallant Gentleman was peculiarly happy in his position, for he said that he had nothing to regret and nothing to retract since he came into Parliament. Few members in that House could make such an admission (hear, hear). The Hon. and gallant Gentleman wished for protection to all; he would give protection to all; and he would give it to labour because it was exposed to the competition of capital at home. He confessed that he was surprised to hear an Hon. Member for Liverpool complain of the competition between English labour and English capital, and ask Parliament to protect labour against capital. Then the Hon. Member said that reciprocity was hopeless; that it was all very well to talk about free trade here, but that we could not communicate it to other countries. We had tried negotiations, and we had failed; was it not then advisable to try the effect of example? (hear, hear) Had not our trade with France quintupled, notwithstanding the most rigorous and severe restrictions imposed upon our imports? Then, it was asked, what would become of our colonies, and what would be the effect on British interests in India? The Hon. and gallant Member forgot that the people were supplied with cottons from this country better

and cheaper than they could be procured elsewhere; and yet he said that this measure would be the ruin of England. He asked also how the people on the banks of the Ganges could enter into competition with those of other favoured countries. What did the people of the Brazils inherit by way of advantage over those who inhabited the same clime and had the assistance of British science and British capital? (hear, hear). He (Mr. Ward) had always thought it had been assumed during the discussions on the Slavery Emancipation Bill that free labour was better and cheaper than slave labour; how was it, then, that India could not enter into competition with any other country? The Hon. and gallant Gentleman then appealed to the opinions of Mr. Huskisson. No man entertained a greater respect for the name of Mr. Huskisson, no man had a warmer appreciation of the great services he had rendered to his country, than himself; but Mr. Huskisson was obliged during his long career often to make sacrifices to party requirements; and if an appeal were made to the opinions of Mr. Huskisson in 1825, it would be right that an appeal should also be made to his opinions towards the close of his career, when he was free from the trammels of party, and ventured to speak his real sentiments. What did he say towards the close? On the 25th of March, 1830, two years after his sliding scale had been in operation, and he had seen its defects, he said, "It was his unalterable conviction that we could not uphold the Corn Laws now in existence together with the taxation, and increase the national prosperity, or preserve public contentment. That these laws could be repealed without affecting the landed interest, whilst the people would be relieved from their distress, he had never had any doubt whatever" (cheers). It was easy to complain of bad faith and of the betrayal of constituencies; but the first thing a public man had to do was, he must be right (hear), and if he found that he was not right he ought at once to return to what reason and experience showed to be most conducive to the real interests of the country. There was no question on which a public man had greater justification in exercising his right to change his opinion than the Corn Laws. It had never been a party question. Many had lived to learn and to benefit by experience. Every day new lights and new facts broke in upon them, and warranted any man in changing his opinion. Mr. Huskisson had changed his opinion. The Noble Lord the Member for the City of London had manfully come forward and declared, "What I did twenty years ago, when I was a young and inexperienced man, was erroneous, and I have seen good reason to change my opinions." He (Mr. Ward) himself admitted that the first vote he had given was with the Right Hon. Baronet, in favour of the Corn Laws, and he had only altered his views since he had brought his mind to bear, and since he had done what few, perhaps, did ("oh, oh!")—looked honestly and fairly into the question, divested from all class—he would not say interests, for they had not so much effect upon an honest mind—but class-prejudices and parties, ties which were more difficult to shake off than considerations of personal interests. Men got hampered with party connexions, or they had made some hasty and ill-considered speech

at a county meeting, and they thought it only consistent with their honour to adhere to their opinions, till the country was united against the obstinate and blundering pursuit of a policy which was as ruinous to their own interests as it was to the interests of the country (cheers). In the course of this long debate he had certainly listened to some very able speeches. There was the speech of the Hon. Member for Northampton (Mr. S. O'Brien), which he had cheered, sitting on that (the Opposition side of the House), quite as much as any one who had listened to it on the other side; he had never heard a speech which in point of delivery, feeling, and tone, and everything except the principle on which it was founded, he more admired. But strip it of its glitter, take away its appeals to the feeling, and it was but a *petitio principii* from the beginning to the end, a begging of the question. It proceeded on the assumption that the Legislature could protect all, that all would be richer and better by their acting on that system of legislation, and that upon this foundation could be built up a fabric of kindly and social relations. And if it were granted that they could thus make the people richer and happier, and if they could thus benefit all without doing injury to any, they had hitherto been the most blundering of mortals, and they had disregarded a most sacred duty when, instead of attempting the grand object, they had preferred an irksome attendance in that House and constant ameliorations. But how did the system work? They had partially tried it last year. It was admitted that if it were applied to any interest, it must be applied to all, that it must be universal. They had no right to apply it to wheat and to neglect barley; and so they were to go down to the smallest interests, which as being unable to protect themselves, had a greater claim to their special attention. They must go down to the smallest branches of the most unimportant manufactures. They had done an injustice in passing the tariff. If Hon. Members would recollect, they took off the duty from tare and clover seed, and yet when the Hon. Baronet the Member for Essex, (Sir J. Tyrrell) met the farmers of Essex, they said,—“What have we to do with this reduction, ninety-nine farmers want tare seed where there is only one who grows it.” There was the question of protection confined to the agricultural interests, and that was the answer of the farmers. This great principle then was most defective—it was a great humbug (laughter); they could not carry it out. What said a Noble Lord a friend of his—though he did not know whether he might still call him his friend, so great were the differences now between them, but one who had been his friend—Lord Dacre? He said that if they had a Free Trade in Corn they must have a Free Trade in cattle food. How could he have this without doing an injustice to some portion of the agricultural body, which grew food for cattle? If the measure which the Hon. Gentleman the Member for Winchester (Mr. B. Escott) had originated had been carried, and if maize had been introduced into this country, there would as a consequence be a lessened demand for oats and barley, and the farmers of Scotland and of the fens of Lincolnshire would be the sufferers. All other interests might be benefited, but one would receive a great injury. The truth was, they could not work out the principle,

and any attempt to do it would involve them in a labyrinth from which they would not be able to extricate themselves, even if Hon. Members opposite had a Ministry of their own. Were they then to sacrifice to this principle the great interests connected with a large and cheap supply of food for this country? It was said, however, that we could not compete with foreigners, because we were so heavily taxed. This was a question which ought to be approached with peculiar delicacy by Hon. Gentlemen opposite (cheers). For six years this had been constantly put forward as the reason for refusing a change; and he was now delighted to find, by the votes of another House, that a Noble Lord had taken up the subject, and had adopted almost the exact words of his own motion. A corresponding notice he had given in that House, and for three years successively he had endeavoured to procure an inquiry (cheers). If the agricultural interests had any peculiar burdens they ought to be ashamed if they could not prove them; for three years he had given them the opportunity, which they had declined. He had certainly assumed that as Honourable Gentlemen never had proved their case or attempted it, so they never could. Were they, however, to shrink on grounds such as he had alluded to, grounds so contradictory and so inconsistent, from entertaining, and favourably entertaining he trusted the House would, and as the country had done, the very large propositions brought forward by her Majesty's Government. He would give to those propositions his most cordial support as the salvation of the agricultural interest, because he believed the worst thing that could be done would be to leave them to themselves; nothing could be more fatal than any attempt on their part to go on without leading-strings. They never had known, they did not now know their own interests; they had made the strangest mistakes whenever they had been enabled by courtesy or circumstance to try their hand in the statute book. The Hon. Gentleman said they would destroy the trade of the country if the Corn Laws were altered. He assured the Hon. Member, that whatever might be the feelings of some Hon. Gentlemen in that House, tenants in many parts of the country entertained a very different opinion; they did not see those frightful contingencies from the relaxation of protection, provided the landlords met them in a fair spirit. They knew, on the contrary, that they could do nothing with safety until this question was settled, that settled it must be, and that that could be only in one way now; that the period of uncertainty and difficulty might be protracted for a few months, perhaps a twelvemonth longer, but that the system of the Corn Laws must come at last to a total abrogation of protective duty. They were anxious for it, always supposing that the tillage of land was put on a more rational basis than now—that the obsolete terms of the leases were expunged in future—that they were not forced to support the game of their landlords; that certainly was one of the peculiar burdens upon land (hear, hear)—and that they were to meet with more support for two or three years in the difficulties they expected and were prepared to encounter (hear, hear). He admitted it; but had the agricultural interest had no difficulties to encounter during the time they had had protection? Had they had no fluctuations of price? Had not

the Right Hon. Baronet spoken of the complaints of low prices, and of the ruinous consequences to the tenants, in the years 1832 and 1835? Was not the price of wheat in 1839 only 42s., and that under a law, the law of 1815, that promised a price of 80s. to the farmer? Were there not more fluctuations under that law than any man could conceive under a system of free trade? (hear, hear). He recollected a passage in the writings of a gentleman who wrote in language peculiarly expressive, in which he called all those fallacies in which public men were in the habit of indulging, "political lies," and he said that never was there a lie yet which was not brought to nature's bank for payment (hear, hear). Why, that was the case here; they came at last to the lowest classes, and could press it no further. That was the point to which protection in this country had come. At the very moment of manufacturing prosperity, there was also great distress—at the very moment of agricultural prosperity they found the same difficulties pressing on the agricultural districts. But there was one resource before them—let them take the path now opened to them—let them look to the great development of the interests of this country, and the consequent increase of employment, as the only thing that would permanently improve the situation of all classes of the population; and when they had ascertained what was the right course to pursue, without regard to small or selfish interests, he hoped that upon calm consideration that would have an influence on the great body of the English gentry now arrayed against these measures. It was a difficult task that they had undertaken; but never were the gentry of England in higher estimation than now, and he should be grieved to see them forfeit one particle of their position; but when a class, however numerous, however powerful, raised themselves against the interests of a whole community, depend upon it it could not long command either the respect or the kindly sympathy of the people (hear). It was a question involving their personal interests; he said that with reference to himself, for every interest he had was in land; but he gave his support to the policy of his friends behind him, because he saw that it was the irresistible claim of justice (hear, hear). Already some of the brightest ornaments of that House had been driven from it by the honest admission of their convictions upon this subject. The Hon. Member for Huntingdon had spoken of a compromise, but he assured the Hon. Member that, so far as the sense of the country went, they thought that the only fault of this great scheme was, that it did not work out its principles far enough. There was no conceivable reason why the duty upon butter and cheese should be reduced one-half, and the duty upon corn taken off altogether; and as to any idea of a compromise, he could assure the Hon. Gentleman that every attempt would only serve to protract the struggle and involve all the interests connected with agriculture in inextricable confusion; that any arrangement would not be satisfactory to all parties, to landlords as well as tenants; and that they would lose the opportunity, which perhaps they might never have again, of admitting foreign corn without any check to the industry of the country; and he sincerely trusted that the majority with which the measures of the Government would be sanctioned in that House might be large

enough to insure some such reception of them elsewhere as he was certain they would meet from the country.

MR. W. MILES said he rose as one of that class which the Hon. Gentleman who had just spoken had said sat there to promote their own interests; he thought that expression harsh, for as he had always done full justice to the opinions of Hon. Gentlemen opposite, and thought that they had acted from zealous but mistaken motives, for the good of their country, so did he expect the same consideration in return. This was a great question; and although the Hon. Member said that the Hon. Member for Roxburghshire had wandered over the world in this discussion, yet when they considered the magnitude of the subject, they could not, in his opinion, look too far afield, or meditate too much upon the injuries they contemplated inflicting, not only upon our home produce, but also upon that of our colonies, and of every place that was now dependent on us. It was not an agricultural debate, though it was a great deal merged in it, but it was a debate involving every question, and those interests that were most dear to the whole population of the country. There was not an interest that was left untouched; and it would ill become them to take up this as an agricultural question, and to contend for what the Hon. Member opposite had called their class interest; but at any rate he thought that the party opposed to the Right Hon. Baronet had the wishes and the determination of the great body of the people of England (hear, hear). He thought the Hon. Gentleman who had just spoken had put this question most fairly—that either protection must be defended as a principle, and applicable to all classes, or if they at once abandoned it and took it away from one, then all protection must be withdrawn from every branch (hear, hear). That was the best ground upon which this subject could be debated (hear, hear). The Hon. Member for Huntingdon had talked of a compromise. He (Mr. Miles) was never for a compromise (hear, hear). He thought they must either stand precisely as they did now, or must adopt the measure proposed by the Right Hon. Baronet or the Honourable Gentleman opposite (hear, hear). He conceived that the measures now brought forward were brought forward against the experience of centuries, and he had now to ask whether the successful experiment of the short period of the last three years could be taken as an argument for the withdrawal of all protection against it—the experience indeed of centuries, during which this country had risen to a height of prosperity which no other country had ever yet attained,—from that system of protection which some Hon. Gentlemen were now anxious to abolish (hear, hear). He would ask those Hon. Gentlemen whether we were singular in the adoption of that principle of protection, or whether it was not universal: and whether it would not be almost an act of insanity to withdraw it, and to hope to maintain the artisan and labourer of this country in direct competition with the foreigner. He would ask that, for they had but slender hopes that foreign countries would follow the example; since the effect of the tariff of 1842 had caused several foreign states, instead of lowering, to raise theirs, and increase their duties upon our produce (hear). But, in looking at this question, he should like as much as pos-

sible to follow the two different statements made by the Right Hon. Gentleman at the head of the government; and he would make allusion first of all to his speech on the address, because, with that admirable Parliamentary tact which the Right Hon. Gentleman knew so well how to follow, he made that speech just the commencement of the one that afterwards followed, and which now formed the subject of the present debate. In that speech the Right Hon. Baronet stated that since taxes had been withdrawn from flax, meat, wool, and lard, the prices of those articles had greatly advanced. He (Mr. Miles) would take the case of flax in the first instance. This was an article at one time much cultivated in the county he had the honour to represent, but since the repeal of the duty, the cultivation of flax was almost entirely given over; and such was the case in many other counties of England. It was true that flax was now grown in Ireland, and why? The flax that used to be grown in England was now cultivated there, because the soil was equally propitious for its culture, and the wages of labour were much smaller (hear). He had in his hand a return for four parishes in the county of Somerset, which showed the amount lost by the labouring population from this measure. He would merely take the averages, pointing out what the amount of cultivation in flax was before the diminution of the duty, and what it was at the present time—what was the amount of labour which it called forth, and what the loss had been to the agricultural population by these Free Trade measures (hear). He had returns from four parishes, viz., Chisselburgh, Aldcock, and East Cocker and West Cocker:—"Previous to the abolition of the duty, the cultivation of flax in Chisselburgh was 100 acres; in Aldcock, 100 acres; in East Cocker, 150 acres; in West Cocker, 360 acres; making a total of 710 acres in these four parishes. Since the reduction of the duty, the cultivation of flax in Chisselburgh was only ten acres; in Aldcock, four acres; in East Cocker, twelve acres; and in West Cocker, twenty acres; making only forty-six acres now cultivated (hear, hear). The expense of the cultivation of an acre of flax and preparing it for work was five pounds; it afforded labour to a vast portion of the industrious population; and he would just look to what had been withdrawn from that industrious population by this Free Trade measure. The parish of Chisselburgh had lost £1,350; Aldcock, £1,440; East Cocker, £2,070; West Cocker, £5,100, making altogether a loss, by the trade going away, of £9,960" (hear). Then, as regarded meat: the Member for Newcastle had left out one statement that he wished he had brought before the House. He attributed the high price of meat at the present time to various causes, chiefly to the murrain that had arisen of late years, and to the scarcity of provender and the failure of the green crops that had been experienced in the southern and western counties in 1844 and 1845. Now it was perfectly true that all those causes led to the high prices of meat; but the Hon. Member did not follow up the matter sufficiently; he did not state the decrease that had taken place in the supply of Smithfield market—a decrease during the last six months compared with 1845 of 250,000. Nor did he state that there was a weekly decrease in sheep to the extent of 16,000 as compared with last year. All this would account for

the high price of beef at the present time (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet should also recollect that the animals brought into market in 1845 were not half so fat as those produced this year. The want of proper feeding in that and the preceding year lessened the animals in weight from ten to seven stones, and consequently there was a greater consumption of animals without the same quantity of meat (hear). He would now come to the article of wool, and would first of all remark that that House could not be blamed with throwing any obstacle in the way of the reduction on wool, for on that subject they gave the Right Hon. Gentleman their best support. The consequence had been a great increase in the amount of wool used by the manufacturers, and the price of the article necessarily rose. In this case, as he believed it was in all others, the interests of manufacture and agriculture went together. He believed that when the one prospered the other must; and that when one fell the other would fall also (hear, hear). As to the subject of lard, it was impossible to state, from the information they possessed, what was the state of the trade; but he believed, that when the proper return was before them, it would be found that one great reason why the price of lard was so high was the deficiency in the supply of oil. He felt strongly, and so must the House, that it was the duty of every Minister to promote the welfare, and to ensure the confidence of all classes—agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing, in this great country. The Right Hon. Baronet seemed to treat the home market as nothing; he had allied himself to the manufacturing interest, and would sacrifice our home manufactures to the foreign (hear). He seemed to have thrown overboard the industrious energies of the nation, and left them to competition with the light-taxed and low-waged people of the continent, and to the capitalists of the illimitable territory and light-taxed continent of America (cheers). Were we manufacturers? So were they. Were we producers of food? So were they. Our manufactures were in the highest state of prosperity, and had reached the highest point of perfection. The skill of our people was infinite, but the skill of the mechanic was completely superseding the skill and labour of the artisan (hear). Capital they would find always flowing into any kind of trade in which there was a chance of gain; so that, with capital abundant, and manufacturing ingenuity and skill great, the country might surely become, but for the restrictive policy of other nations, manufacturers for the world. He would next call attention to the statement made by the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) relative to the amount of exports which had taken place during the last three years of great plenty, as compared with the three preceding years of deficiency. It had struck him, that if the Right Hon. Gentleman had gone further back, and, instead of adopting triennial calculations, had taken a cycle of twelve years, he would have given a much fairer result. Even taking the triennial average of corn, as well as the triennial average of exports, they would find that the price of corn had nothing whatever to do with exports; but he held that a cycle of twelve years would have shown this much more distinctly. But, with the leave of the House, he would take the triennial calculations, and he would begin with 1834. In 1834 the average prices of wheat were 46s., the exports

were 41,000,000 ; in 1835, wheat was 39s., the exports, 47,000,000 ; in 1836, wheat was 48s. 9d., and the exports 47,000,000 ; so that he found the average prices of wheat were 44s. 8d., while he found the triennial average of exports to be 45,000,000. And then, going into the next years, they would perceive, in 1837, that the average price of corn was 45s. 9d., the exports being 53,000,000 ; in the next year the average price of corn was 45s. 1d., the exports then being 42,000,000 ; in 1839 the average price of corn was 70s. 5d., and the exports were 50,000,000 ; which made the average price of corn during that triennial period 63s. 9d., and the average amount of exports 48,000,000. Then, going further into the years 1840, 1841, and 1842 ; in the first year the average price of corn was 66s. 3d., whereas the exports were only 53,000,000 ; in the next year the average price of corn was 64s. 3d., while the exports were 51,000,000 ; in 1842 the price of corn was 57s. 3d., the average amount of exports being 47,000,000 : and they would from this see, that during this other triennial period the average exports were 50,000,000 ; the average price of corn appearing at 62s. 7d. And, taking the last years according to the figures furnished by the Right Hon. Baronet himself, in 1843 the average price of corn was 50s. 1d., and the average amount of exports 52,000,000 ; in 1844 corn was at 51s. 3d., while the average exports were 58,000,000 ; in 1845, for which year there was, in the absence of any return, authentic calculations, they had wheat at 52s., and they had a falling off in the Right Hon. Baronet's calculations, for the exports were 58,000,000 ; so that for this period the exports appeared as 56,000,000 ; with an average price of corn of about 51s. They, therefore, found the exports gradually, progressively increasing, while they, in the same ratio, found the price of corn decreasing ; they would find that the price of corn had no relative affinity whatever to the amount of exports, and they could not but come to the conclusion, so far as their exports in the foreign trade were concerned, that that naturally depended on the demand and supply, the prices of corn being no different (hear, hear). From the consideration of this subject he was led into the inquiry as to what was in reality the cause of our prosperity—in inquiry which had been already alluded to by several Hon. Members. There would have been less difficulty in answering the question if the Right Hon. Baronet had been good enough to give to the country his speech on the second, instead of, as had been the case, on the first night of the session ; the people of the country would then have been able to distinguish what the prosperity consisted of. On the second night, as would be in the recollection of the House, the Right Hon. Baronet brought forward the question of railways ; he then gave to them the number of bills that were passed, the estimated expenses for the formation and completion of those railways, and he then made an assertion, which could not be controverted, that each line had taken three years to be completed. and that during that period upwards of £23,000,000 sterling which had been before locked up, had been thrown directly into the labour market. Now, he (Mr. Miles) would leave it to a discerning public to judge which had been the greatest benefit to the country—the foreign trade so much upheld, with so much sacrifice, by the Right Hon. Baronet, or that immense

mass of capital thus set afloat in the country and into a market, that of railway construction, where it was well known they were all great consumers and little savers (hear, hear). It was therefore palpable that that extraordinary prosperity, made so much of, in being referred to by the Right Hon. Baronet, was to be attributed in a great measure, if not entirely, to the capital let loose in the way he had mentioned. Under such circumstances, not only was there a greater demand and a greater stimulus to the supply of the common necessities of life, but likewise a greatly increased consumption of what were termed common luxuries. In connexion with the railways being formed, there had been an unprecedented prosperity, sudden in its origin, but lasting in its effects, in the iron trade. He held in his hand a document which showed, by the convincing aid of figures, the extraordinary depression in that trade in 1842; and showed further, the still more remarkable progress in prosperity and profits, not only with the iron masters, but in the wages and the condition of the miners. In 1842 common bar-iron was quoted at from £4 10s. to £5 per ton; in 1845 the same iron was from £9 to £9 10s. In 1842 the workmen were but half employed, and half the works were standing, the colliers getting 2s. per day, and having only in the week three days' work! in 1846 the colliers had 3s. 6d. a-day, daily, for ten hours' work; in 1842, the miners' wages were 5s. 6d. per ton, and in 1846 they were 10s. 6d. per ton. In the latter period all the works were in full work, new works were being erected on all sides, shafts being sunk for coal and iron,—workmen not to be had, and, for that reason, the masters at their mercy; so that, if it were necessary to increase the supply, it would be sinews rather than money which would be found to be the want; consequently it would not be possible to find iron for foreign demand. The masters were full of engagements, which would last for three years, with prices varying from £10 to £13 10s. a ton, while in 1842 they made and sold at £5 5s., the delivery costing 10s. per ton. These were facts which would at once show the activity created by the capital alluded to being thus thrown into the labour-market, and the benefit derived was strictly a home benefit, for it was known seven-eighths of the iron trade came into the British market. He would now as briefly as possible address himself to the agricultural part of the question; he might deal with it imperfectly, but he wished to show that they (the Protectionists) were not, as had been stated, acting in direct opposition to the wishes, as most surely they were not to the interests of the country, that their opinions were well founded, and that in the course they were taking, they were actuated as much by a reference to the welfare of the manufacturing and commercial, as by a care of the agricultural industry. In glancing at the Corn Law of 1842, what had they to complain of? He had supported that Corn Law, and he believed it was a better law than the previous one of 1828. It did away with fraudulent averages, and was the best possible law that could have been devised for the circumstances. But the Right Hon. Baronet had not quoted the averages under that law, for he would find their very honesty proof against his own arguments. It was often asserted, by various Honorable Members, that the population had so greatly increased, it was an impossibility to produce sufficient

for the demand. And this statement was made because the returns of consumption had increased ; but this had been effected by the addition of an immense number of towns to the averages. The Hon. Baronet who seconded the amendment, founded his opinions, no doubt on the returns moved for relative to the prices in London of wheat and bread and the prices of corn ; but he (Mr. Miles) had, more than once, shown that in the Metropolis the price of bread and flour bore no proportion whatever to the price of wheat ; and that if blame is to be attached to any individual for enhancing the price of food, it was not to be attached to the farmer, but was to be divided between the baker and the miller. If the miller and baker had only a fair profit, the price of bread in this Metropolis ought to be 7*d.* It was now 3*d.* above what it ought to be. The Hon. Member for Warwick (Mr. Newdegate) had asked what the Right Hon. Baronet calculated would be the price of wheat under this free trade system? The answer was that it would depend on the seasons. So good a calculator as the Right Hon. Baronet might be able to say what were likely to be the prices in 1849 and 1850 ; for so admirable were the Right Hon. Baronet's calculations the last time he legislated on this subject that prices had ranged between the two points which he had specified as the probable limits of variation. The Right Hon. Baronet seemed to have taken half the *maximum* in his own sliding scale, and half Lord J. Russell's proposed fixed duty, to form the limits—10*s.* and 4*s.* of his new scale. But the proposed *minimum* duty of 4*s.* was open to all the objections which applied to Lord J. Russell's fixed duty of 8*s.* He (Mr. Miles) was not going to desert his principles. He opposed the Right Hon. Gentleman's plan ; and so he should oppose the Noble Lord's, that is, if the Noble Lord showed fight, which was very doubtful from what his Lordship had said the other night. But though he (Mr. Miles) and others would oppose either plan, yet he must say, that for the sake of the farmer, the Noble Lord's proposition would be infinitely the better of the two (loud cheers). With reference to local burdens on agriculture, returns had been promised which would show what those were. He had taken an estimate of the local charges and of the price of the labour which entered into the cultivation of the land, from answers transmitted from all parts of the country to a committee of practical farmers now sitting, and he found that in the case of an ordinary farm, three-fourths arable and one-fourth pasture, the charges were on the average 37*s.* per week. The Right Hon. the Secretary at War had said, it was time for the alarmists to lay aside their fears or show some reason for their apprehensions. When they considered the immense agricultural capabilities of America, he thought the House would see that their alarm was not without just cause. Great Britain contained 119,000 square miles, while the states on the Mississippi, which had New Orleans for their market, contained 450,000 square miles ; an area which afforded facilities for raising grain to supply an immense population. Whatever we might have to fear, however, from America, we had more to fear from Prussia. America might take our manufactures—Prussia would take none. Nor did he think that the agricultural resources of Prussia had

been brought forward with sufficient prominence in that House. He held in his hand a statement which showed what were the agricultural capabilities of the different provinces of that kingdom, and what would be the quantity of grain which they would be able to export. The Hon. Member proceeded to read a list of the different provinces and their productions, some portions of which were only audible in the gallery. Of the northern provinces the soil was described as fertile, with 5,000,000 of acres of arable land, and a capability of production in 10,000,000 more. The produce of these was chiefly grain, wheat, rye, oats, and barley. Of these they produced 3,500,000 chetwerts, of which 1,000,000 were exported; flax and tobacco were also cultivated. Esthonia was not adapted to grow much corn, although it still raised more than was required for the consumption of its population. In the Polish provinces, where there was an alluvial and sandy soil, rye was the chief produce. Of this 6,550,000 hectolitres were produced, of which only one-third was consumed. These provinces exported considerable quantities of corn and flour. In many other provinces the same was the case. Pultowa, which with the surrounding provinces was esteemed the granary of Prussia, produced 6,560,000 chetwerts, of which 1,500,000 were exported. In Kiel, in like manner, where the soil was fertile, the production bore the proportion of six to one of the consumption. In Podolia in like manner the production vastly exceeded the consumption. He now came to Tamboff. The extent of this Province was 25,000 square miles, and according to the statement of Mr. M'Gregor it would produce 12,000,000 bushels of corn (hear, hear). Notwithstanding all that had been said to the contrary, he had yet to learn that a new Ministry could not be formed; for the minds of politicians appeared to be so framed that the moment they discovered that the people were determined on any system of policy, and a majority of that House could be obtained to support it, there was no difficulty in obtaining leaders to carry it out. But the worst state of things of all was that truckling policy between an Administration and an Opposition of which they had seen so much of late; and the worst descent of all was that state of things in which statesmen could be brought to vote in favour of a measure to the principle of which they were opposed (hear, hear). The supporters of Protection, and those who were interested in its maintenance, might confidently depend on the band which was arrayed in that House in opposition to the Right Hon. Baronet on this question (hear, hear). That party would stand by the principle of Protection so long as this measure continued in that House, and would support that principle to the extent of their ability. When it was considered that a majority of the members of that House had been returned to Parliament as opponents of the free trade measures of the Noble Lord (Lord J. Russell), and when he found that that Parliament had advanced (except with regard to the article of corn) even beyond the measures proposed by the Right Hon. Member for Portsmouth (Mr. F. Baring); that they were about to sanction further alterations with regard to sugar and timber; and that they were asked by the very Minister who was placed in power to support the Corn Laws, to repeal those laws;

and he believed he was expressing a very general opinion when he said, that he could never again repose confidence in the Right Hon. Baronet who had thus betrayed those who had placed him in office to maintain their interests (cheers). Must they not always look with suspicion upon those who should have been their leaders—who, by intellect, capacity, and powers of Parliamentary debating, were well fitted for such a position ("hear, hear" from the Protection benches). He could only state that, while he admired the manly, open, and upright bearing of the Noble Lord, the Member for London—(loud cheers from the Protectionists)—he could never follow the steps of a cautious and temporising leader (renewed cheering).

The EARL OF MARCH moved the adjournment of the debate, but before the question was put,

LORD NORTHLAND rose amid great confusion, occasioned by Members quitting the House, and said that he wished to take this opportunity of stating what course he intended to pursue with regard to this measure. He considered that the proposal of the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) was unnecessary, and he agreed with the Noble Lord the Member for Liverpool (Lord Sandon), that in dealing with such a question they should look before them (a laugh). He (Lord Northland) feared, however, that the agriculturists would not, at a future period, be able to make so satisfactory an arrangement as was offered by the Right Hon. Baronet's proposal (cries of "Oh," from the Protection benches, and cheers from the Opposition). The crisis had arrived ; and he felt that it was the interest of the farmers of England (ironical cheers), and of the landlords of England (cries of "Oh, oh," and ironical cheers), that this long-mooted question should be finally settled. He had arrived at that conclusion after deep consideration (ironical cheering). They were placed in this position—they must choose between the measure of the Right Hon. Baronet, and the proposal of the Noble Member for the City of London. Now he had no confidence in that Noble Lord (ironical cheers from the Opposition benches). He had great confidence in the Right Hon. Baronet (ironical cheering from both sides). Taking all these circumstances into consideration, and believing that this question must now be finally settled, he would prefer seeing such a settlement effected by the Right Hon. Baronet than by any other individual.

COLONEL T. WOOD then rose, but the confusion caused by a number of Members leaving the House, prevented the Hon. and Gallant Member's remarks from being audible in the gallery for some minutes. He said, he believed that the measure proposed by her Majesty's Government would tend to promote the welfare of the country ; and that its adoption at this time was essentially and absolutely necessary for the maintenance of our national prosperity. The Hon. Member for Somerset had appealed to the operatives of this country to come forward to aid him, and to aid the landed interest in maintaining that protection, which he conceived essential to their security and prosperity. But, although many of their trades were affected by the measures before the House, the operatives, now that the application of the principles of Free

Trade was made upon a large and general scale, would believe that the same justice was meted out to them as to the great and powerful interests of the country, and would acquiesce even in a temporary injury. In such cases, under the former tariff, the complaint had always been—"If we are to be exposed to competition, let it be an open and free competition." When the duty on fruit was reduced from 20 per cent. to 5, the market gardeners naturally enough said, "Why not reduce the duty on corn also?" However, they sustained no injury, for prices were as good as before; and this ground of complaint would now be removed (hear, hear). The Noble Member for London had complained that the support was not given to him in measures of this kind, which he was now prepared to give to these; and he (Colonel Wood) did regret that in the course of opposition he was led to act as many others did, and resist Free Trade measures when brought forward by the Noble Lord (hear, hear). That course created a great deal of the present difficulty (hear, hear). In truth, the main question before the House really was one of time. Did the exigencies of the moment, or rather of last November, demand this great change in our commercial policy? Now, almost every speaker had admitted the scarcity in Ireland to be such, that if the Government had thrown open the ports that step would have been consented to; and really that was an admission of the whole question. Besides, without this scarcity, a deficient harvest would before many years have created the emergency. On the whole, he (Colonel Wood) felt that these measures of Free Trade would be for the general welfare of the country, and would in the long run be beneficial to the agricultural interest itself (hear, hear).

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was then put and agreed to.

#### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16.

The EARL OF MARCH expressed his astonishment at the sudden conversion of Lord Northland to the cause of Free Trade. Other Members had taken a considerable time to alter their opinions, but Lord Northland's conversion was miraculously sudden; for in the course of the last month he had delivered himself of two speeches in that House, one against Free Trade and the other in favour of it. He could not say to what private cell the Noble Lord had retired to complete his conversion. This he was sure of, that he had not been in the House, for all the argument had been on one side, and that in favour of Protection. He lectured Mr. B. Cochrane for his attack on the Duke of Richmond. It was true that the Duke of Richmond had been a member of Earl Grey's Administration, but that was no reason that he should be a Free Trader; for Earl Grey, its head, was an advocate for Protection. He then proceeded to contend that the abolition of Protection would be the utter ruin of the country; and that Mr. Sidney Herbert's plan to settle the question of the Corn Laws by throwing them altogether overboard was not the way to come to a satisfactory settlement of it. Mr. S. Herbert had favoured the House with the cogent reasons which had produced the change in his opinions. He

should like to hear what Mr. Goulburn and Lord G. Somerset had to say in favour of this measure, which they once opposed, but which they now supported. After dwelling at some length on the inconsistency of Lord Lincoln, Mr. Gladstone, and other Members of the Administration, who at the last general election had denounced a more moderate measure than the present as "the fugitive humbug of a dying political faction," and who were now supporting a proposition for the total abolition of all protective duties, he concluded by declaring that he could not give his assent to a measure so detrimental as the present to all classes of the community.

MR. M. GIBSON, in reply to the argument that this Parliament, having been elected to continue Protection, ought not and could not agree to abolish it, asserted that this Parliament, having been elected expressly for the consideration of Protection, was, of all others, the Parliament best entitled to discuss and settle the question connected with it. If the charge of misrepresentation rested on any party for what was done at the last election, it rested most particularly on the representatives of the agricultural interest; for they induced the farmers to believe that the leaders of their party, notwithstanding the speeches delivered by those leaders themselves, and the comments made upon them by others, would support Protection at all risks. Why, even Sir Robert Peel had told them that he would not prescribe till he was called in. They had called him in, and they were now suffering from the drastic purge which he had administered. He then proceeded to refute the statistical returns which were put forth on Friday night by Mr. Miles as the great Protection case. He denied that the English farmer in the price of labour and in the amount of local taxation, had burdens to contend with which did not press upon the Polish and the American farmer. With respect to America, it was notorious that the price of labour was nearly double that in England; and when there was added to it the taxation to which the American was liable, and the freight and insurance which he must pay before he could transport his produce to England, it was evident that the English farmer was sufficiently protected against his competition by the natural course of things, without any artificial regulations. But if the English farmer were not protected sufficiently in this manner, he was not entitled to any further protection whatsoever. The foreign corn trade was a branch of industry which Englishmen had a right to follow free and unmolested, and the agricultural interest had no right to impede them in it either to suit their own convenience or to promote their pecuniary advantage. If those Corn Laws were so material to the prosperity of the agricultural interest, why did we not see at present some fall in the price of land? There was no appearance of it in any quarter; on the contrary, in Suffolk, a friend of his had called his tenants, sixty-three in number, together since Sir R. Peel had made known his new code of commercial policy, and had offered them the renewal of their leases for a long period, and not one of them had asked for any reduction of rent, for, said they—"We are convinced that Protection is a bane, and not a benefit to agriculture." Turning, however, from the agriculturists to Sir R. Peel, he wished

to know why, if the Corn Laws were to be totally abolished, the repeal was not to take place now? Why should we defer to a distant day that measure which justice required, and which the present emergency of the country imperiously demanded? First of all, he thought that the agriculturist would do better to take his competitors by surprise than to give them warning of the opening of our markets. In the next place, if the emergency required that we should purchase out of the taxes foreign corn in America and Poland for our domestic supply, we ought not to impose a farthing duty on its importation. He, therefore urged upon the Government the propriety of making this repeal immediate; for unless they did so, their arrangement would not settle this conflict amicably and peaceably. The question was now in such a position that it could not be endangered. It was carried indeed already, not indeed by this Parliament or by politicians in either House of Parliament, but by the force of public opinion out of doors. There was no truer barometer of public opinion than Sir R. Peel. If they wished to know what the people out of doors were thinking of, let them look to what Sir R. Peel was doing.

MR. HALSEY wished that all the extempore proselytes to Free Trade would make such a candid declaration of the reasons of their conversion as had been made by Lord Northland on a former evening, as it would be useful to the House, and still more useful to its constituents. After a passing attack upon the Anti-Corn Law League for its proceedings in collecting large sums of money for the purpose of meddling with the registration and of tampering in elections, he proceeded to denounce the Government plan as a measure which supported Free Trade, and yet did not carry it out—which repudiated Protection, and yet left it in force. The farmer was not allowed to cultivate tobacco, because it was necessary to protect the revenue, and also some colonial interests. Were the landowners to allow the ports to be thrown open, and then to be told that they must cultivate their farms with their hands tied behind them? Sir R. Peel proposed to reduce one-half the duty on foreign hops; and yet there was no reduction to be made to the same amount on the excise duty on English hops. He (Mr. Halsey) was the advocate of equal justice and protection to all classes. He wished to know, if the price of English wheat should fall, on what principle Sir Robert would settle the Tithe Commutation Act? Sir Robert had also said that the revenue would not be affected by the changes which he now proposed; but if he were disappointed in that calculation, would he make up the deficiency of the revenue by doubling the Property Tax, and by making it avowedly permanent?

MR. DICKINSON considered that the proposal now made by the Government was just and right, and therefore he should support it. However the members of the Central Agricultural Association might complain of the proceedings of the Anti-Corn Law League, it was undeniable that they themselves acted on the very same principles. Else what was meant by their interference in elections, and their dictation of pledges to county members? He then proceeded to explain the reasons which had induced him to moderate the views which he had formerly entertained on the subject of Protection, and

to support the measure of the Government. He was convinced that it would inflict no great loss either on the owners of landed property, or on those who were subordinate to them. He should, however, consider it as an improvement to the Government plan, if its operation were made immediate.

LORD ALFRED CHURCHILL in a brief speech, which was very imperfectly heard in the House, declared his intention of opposing the measure which had recently proceeded from the new lights of Sir R. Peel and his colleagues in the Ministry.

SIR W. CLAY lamented that this debate had partaken so much of a personal character. It had been called a one-sided debate ; but if it were so, it was owing to the fact that the staple of the arguments on the other side had been the abuse of Sir R. Peel, and not the defence of a system of protective duties. The country gentlemen had absolutely overdone their case : they had proved too much for their own side ; for when they showed that Sir R. Peel had broken up a noble party they convinced the public that he had discarded all merely personal interests, and that under the pressure of an overwhelming necessity, he had sought nothing else than the advantage of the country. He then proceeded to refute several statements in the speech of Mr. Miles on Friday night. That gentleman had declared himself the open foe of all future relaxation of protection. Might he ask Mr. Miles if he was prepared to condemn the past relaxations of it, and to retrace the steps which had been already taken towards Free Trade ? If he would not abrogate past relaxation, with what show of reason did he call on the House to proceed no further in its present liberal and enlightened course ? The cry of protection to native industry found no echo out of doors. He (Sir W. Clay) gave his entire approbation to the measure, which would be productive of no injury to the agricultural interest. If there was one interest deeply concerned in the abrogation of these laws, it was the agricultural interest, for that interest depended more than any other on the success of the whole community. It had nothing to fear from the competition of the agriculturists of the Baltic or the United States.

MR. BUCK participated in the alarm and dismay which this unjust and uncalled for measure had produced among his constituents. The annunciation of it had shaken all confidence in public men, and its baneful influence would extend not only to the agricultural, but also to all the trading and manufacturing classes of the country. To the working part of the population it would be eminently injurious ; for whenever the price of wheat had been high pauperism had been low, and whenever the price had been low pauperism had been high. Having delivered himself of a passionate invective against Sir R. Peel for having deceived and deserted the Conservative Associations, which he had himself called into existence, and of a bitter attack upon the Anti-Corn Law League, he concluded by declaring his intention to give a most decided negative to this most rash and injurious measure.

LORD H. VANE explained the reasons why he was now prepared to give a vote in opposition to the policy which he had formerly followed on this question. Though he had always urged the reduction of

duties on agricultural as well as on all other production, he had never yet gone the length of advocating the total repeal of the Corn Laws. He believed that a low fixed duty would have been equally advantageous for all commercial purposes, and therefore regretted that it had been abandoned. The time for compromise had now unfortunately gone by ; and the question was not to be settled now, except by the adoption of some such measure as that proposed by Sir R. Peel. He appealed to the country gentlemen in the House, and asked them whether it would not be advisable for them to withdraw their opposition to this measure, seeing that they could not hope to resist it effectually, after the numerous conversions which had taken place.

SIR J. TYRRELL, after denouncing the Government scheme as a claptrap proposition, observed, that in speaking on it it was impossible to avoid making personal reflections on Sir R. Peel, inasmuch as he always represented the Government in his own person, and scarcely permitted any of his colleagues in the Administration to speak. The present measure would not settle the question of Protection ; for not many moons would elapse before Lord John Russell would come forward with a motion for abrogating the discriminating duties on sugar ; and if the present motion were carried, he did not see how that could be resisted. He amused the House by stating, that as Sir Robert Peel had appealed to posterity for its judgment on his policy, the sooner posterity had an opportunity of judging on his merits the better. If the House should pass this measure for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and if the House of Lords should register that verdict all ties between the upper and lower classes of society would be dissolved, and misery, ruin, and anarchy would ensue.

MR. JAMES took pride to himself that on every occasion, since he had been in Parliament he had voted in favour of the repeal of the Corn Laws. On the first occasion, when it was brought forward by Henry Hunt, he had been one of the tellers, and there was only a minority of 5 in favour of it. Now he trusted that the majority would be counted by as many hundreds as there were formerly units in the minority.

SIR R. PEEL then rose and spoke as follows :—Mr. Speaker, two matters of great importance have occupied the attention of the House during this protracted debate—the one, the manner in which a party should be conducted ; the other, the measures by which the contingency of a great public calamity shall be mitigated, and the principles by which the commercial policy of a great empire shall for the future be governed (loud cheers). On the first point, the manner in which the party should be conducted, by far the greatest part of this debate has turned (hear, hear). I do not undervalue its importance ; but, great as it is, surely it is subordinate in the eyes of a people to that other question to which I have referred,—the precautions to be taken against a great danger, and the principles by which your commercial policy shall hereafter be governed. On the party question I admit I have little defence to make (hear). Yes, Sir, these are, I admit at once, the worst measures for party interests, that could have been brought forward by me (cheers). I make that admission freely. I admit at once that it is unfortunate that the conduct of this measure, so far as the Corn Laws are con-

cerned, should be committed to my hands. I admit at once that it would have been far preferable that, even assuming the question was to be settled, those should have the credit, if credit there be, for its settlement who have been its uniform and consistent advocates. That which prevented myself and those who concurred with me from committing it to other hands, was the firm conviction under which we laboured, that a part of this empire was threatened with a great calamity (cheers). I did firmly believe, I do firmly believe, that there is impending over you, and that there will come at no remote period, a calamity that you will all deplore (cheers). I did think that while there was that danger, and while I had the hopes of averting it, it would not be consistent with my duty to my Sovereign, or with the honour of a public man, to take that opportunity of evading the difficulty which is impending (loud cheers). While I retained the hope of a concurrent and agreeing Administration, I thought there was a prospect of bringing this question to a settlement. When I was compelled to abandon that hope, my sense of the coming evil remaining the same, I took the earliest opportunity, and I took it with the utmost satisfaction,—I took the earliest opportunity I could, with a sense of duty and of public honour, of tendering my resignation to the Queen, and leaving her Majesty the full opportunity of consulting other advisers (cheers). I offered no opinion as to the choice of a successor. That is almost the only act which is the personal act of the Sovereign; it is for the Sovereign to determine in whom her confidence ought to be placed. It was my duty to ascertain, in consequence of the request of the Queen, whether those of my colleagues who had dissented from me were either themselves prepared to form a Government, or to advise her Majesty, if they themselves were not prepared to submit to other hands the formation of a Government—meaning by “other hands” those who were favourable to the maintenance of the existing Corn Law. Those from whom I differed, who did not concur with me either as to the full extent of the danger, or as to the policy of altering the law, did signify their opinion that it would not be for the public interests that they should form a Government; nor could they advise her Majesty to resort to others for the formation of a Government founded on the maintenance of the existing Corn Law. Her Majesty determined to call upon the Noble Lord (J. Russell) to undertake the duty of forming an Administration. I was free from the responsibilities of office; the Noble Lord was sent for. My firm belief was, that the Noble Lord would have been enabled to undertake that duty; my firm persuasion was, the Noble Lord will excuse me for saying so, my firm persuasion was, that he would have succeeded if he had undertaken it (cheers). During the long course of my opposition to the Noble Lord I cannot charge myself with having ever said anything disrespectful of him. We have acted against each other for many years, and I don’t recollect anything that ever passed between us likely to produce personal or acrimonious feeling (cheers). But I must say, the Noble Lord did disappoint me when he did not at once undertake the formation of a Government on the principle of adjusting this question (cheers). My impression certainly was, that the Noble Lord would have undertaken it. My impression then was

that I was merely in the capacity of a private Member of Parliament: My strong opinions were that there was cause for apprehending a great danger, and that in taking precautions against that danger you would compel the necessity of a final settlement of the Corn Laws. I knew all the difficulties with which any man would have to contend who undertook the conduct of the Government. I knew there must be a great dislocation of parties. I thought it unfair and dishonourable, under the impression that the Noble Lord would be the Minister, not to take those steps which I thought would diminish his embarrassments (cheers). I have not a word of complaint to make of the Noble Lord for the statement he made the other night. The Noble Lord read one letter, a copy of which he had in his possession, and the general statement he made was a perfectly fair and honourable one. The Noble Lord stated at the time there were other letters of which he had not copies. As reference was then made to other letters, one at least of primary importance, I feel it my duty to read, in order to show that I am sincere in saying that I deprecated the settlement of this question being committed to my hands. I think it right for my vindication in that respect, to state to the House the course which I pursued. I relinquished office on the sixth of December, 1845. I knew then, of course, that those of my colleagues who differed from me had declined to form a Government—had not advised that a Protection Government should be formed. I was aware of that fact. It was not by my advice that the Noble Lord had been sent for by Her Majesty. On the 8th of December, considering myself in a private capacity, anxious to facilitate the adjustment of this question, my opinion having been given in the Cabinet that it must be adjusted, I made a communication to her Majesty, which her Majesty, I believe, made known to the Noble Lord. The Noble Lord had not a copy of it. I wrote, for myself and in my private capacity, this letter to her Majesty on the 8th of December, 1845, the day after I left office, and when my firm persuasion was that the Noble Lord would have accepted the office of Minister, and been able to form an Administration:—

“ WHITEHALL, Dec. 8, 1845.

“ Sir Robert Peel presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and, influenced by no other motive than the desire to contribute if possible to the relief of your Majesty from embarrassment, and to the protection of the public interests from injury, is induced to make to your Majesty this confidential communication explanatory of Sir Robert Peel's position and intentions with regard to the great question which is now agitating the public mind.

“ Your Majesty can, if you think fit, make this communication known to the Minister who, as successor to Sir Robert Peel, may be honoured by your Majesty's confidence.

“ On the 1st of November last Sir Robert Peel advised his colleagues, on account of the alarming accounts from Ireland, and many districts in this country, as to the failure of the potato crop from disease, and for the purpose of guarding against contingencies, which in his opinion were not improbable, humbly to recommend to your Majesty that the duties on the import of foreign grain should be suspended for a limited period, either by order in Council or by legisla-

tive enactment. Parliament in either case being summoned without delay.

"Sir Robert Peel foresaw that this suspension, fully justified by the tenor of the report to which he has referred, would compel, during the interval of suspension, the reconsideration of the Corn Laws.

"If the opinions of his colleagues had then been in concurrence with his own, he was fully prepared to take the responsibility of suspension—and of the necessary consequence of suspension, a comprehensive review of the laws imposing restrictions on the import of foreign grain and other articles of food, with a view to their gradual diminution and ultimate removal.

"He was disposed to recommend that any new laws to be enacted should contain within themselves the principle of gradual and ultimate removal.

"Sir Robert Peel is prepared to support, in a private capacity, measures which may be in general conformity with those which he advised as a Minister.

"It would be unbecoming in Sir Robert Peel to make any reference to the details of such measures.

"Your Majesty has been good enough to inform Sir Robert Peel that it is your intention to propose to Lord John Russell to undertake the formation of a Government.

"The principle on which Sir Robert Peel was prepared to recommend the reconsideration of the laws affecting the import of the main articles of food was in general accordance with that referred to in the concluding paragraph of Lord John Russell's letter to the electors of the City of London.

"Sir Robert Peel wished to accompany the removal of restriction on the admission of such articles with relief to the land from such charges as are unduly onerous, and with such other provisions as, in the terms of Lord John Russell's letter, 'caution and even scrupulous forbearance may suggest.'

"Sir Robert Peel will support measures founded on that general principle, and will exercise any influence he may possess to promote their success."

That was the assurance I conveyed to her Majesty—(cheers)—of my perfect readiness to support, if proposed by others, those measures which I had myself deemed necessary (renewed cheers). I could not but foresee that in addition to all the other difficulties, to which the Noble Lord or any other Minister would have to contend, would be that he would have accepted office at an unfortunate period. Up to the present time we had not only a prosperous revenue, but also a limited expenditure connected with that prosperous revenue. There had been, in each of the last two or three years, a large surplus, and I thought that a Minister succeeding myself might be deterred in part by the prospect that he would accept office when increased expenditure would be necessary, and that, therefore, an unfavourable contrast might be drawn between his financial policy and that of his predecessor. I added, therefore, to my assurance of support with respect to the Corn Laws this further assurance. These

are matters of such importance, that I shall read the *Parliamentary* tion (hear, hear). "Sir Robert Peel feels it to be *in* a great that, should your Majesty's future advisers, after consideration of the heavy demands made upon the army of the country for colonial service, of our relations with the United States, and of the bearing which steam navigation may have upon maritime warfare and the defence of the country, deem it advisable to propose an addition to the army and increased naval and military estimates, Sir Robert Peel will support the proposal—will do all that he can to prevent it from being considered as indicative of hostile or altered feelings towards France, and will assume, for the increase in question, any degree of responsibility, present or retrospective, which can fairly attach to him" (loud cheers). Now, when it is charged on me that I am robbing others of the credit which is justly due to them, I hope that the explanation, which I have now given, of the course I pursued, when I was acting under the firmest persuasion that the adjustment of this question would be committed to others, may tend to prove that I was not desirous of robbing others of the credit of settling this question, or of trying to embarrass their course (loud cheers). There were further communications made, and I was aware in the course of those communications that it was proposed to put me in possession of the particular mode in which it was intended by the Noble Lord to arrange this question. I thought that it would be better that I should not be made acquainted with such details. I thought that my knowledge of them, or any appearance of concert between the Noble Lord and myself, would have had the tendency rather to prejudice than promote the adjustment of this question (hear). I therefore declined to receive the communication of those details; but I think that the Noble Lord must have been satisfied that though I declined to concert the measures with him, yet it was my intention to give to the Noble Lord in the adjustment of this question, according to his views of public policy, that same cordial support which it is his boast he now intends to give me (cheers). I *must* have been the impression of the Noble Lord ("hear, hear," from Lord Russell), because after communications with me the Noble Lord undertook the formation of a Government; and I am sure that the Noble Lord will admit that no act of mine caused the failure of the Noble Lord's attempt, and that I was in no way concerned in the reasons which induced the Noble Lord finally to abandon that attempt (hear, hear). So much, therefore, for the course which I have pursued with respect to those who had been hitherto opposed to me. I never made any inquiry as to who should constitute the new Government; I had no personal objections of any kind. My belief was that this question ought to be adjusted. I was prepared to facilitate its adjustment by my vote, and by the exercise of whatever influence I could command (cheers). Now, Sir, with respect to the course which I have pursued towards those who so long have given me their support. I admit to them that it is but natural that they should withhold from me their confidence. I admit that the course which I am pursuing is at variance with the established principles on which party is conducted. But I do ask of them whether it be probable that I *should* sacrifice their favour-

tive enactment, and their support unless I was influenced by considerable delay. My duty—unless I did believe that the public interests required me to propose measures notwithstanding that they might lead to such a result? (hear, hear). Notwithstanding that which may have passed in this debate—notwithstanding the asperity with which some have spoken, I will do that party (which has hitherto supported me) the justice they deserve (hear). I know that no person can fill the situation I fill without being aware of the motives by which the party is influenced. I must have an opportunity of knowing what are the objects of those around me; and this I will say, after the forfeiture of their confidence, that I do not believe (speaking generally of the great body of the party) that there ever existed a party influenced by more honourable and disinterested feelings (cheers). I know the fact. I know what are their feelings, and I will do them the credit they deserve (cheers). But this I must say, that be the consequences what they may, you cannot rob me of the conviction that the advice which I have given is advice consistent with all the due obligations which party can impose (hear, hear). I know what would have conciliated temporary confidence. It would have been to underrate the danger in Ireland (cheers), to invite a united combination for the maintenance of the existing law (hear), to talk about hoisting the flag of protection for native industry (cheers, and laughter) to insist that agricultural protection should be maintained in all its integrity (hear, hear)—by such a course I should have been sure to have conciliated temporary confidence (hear, hear). But the month of May would not arrive without demonstrating that I had thereby abandoned my duty to my country,—to my Sovereign,—and to party (cheers). I had, and have the firm persuasion that in the present temper of the public mind, the state of public feeling and of public opinion with respect to the Corn Laws, independent of all adventitious circumstances, makes the defence of those Corn Laws difficult enough (hear). Yet I have the firmest persuasion that if that calamity which I foresee in Ireland should arrive, and if the battle had to be fought for maintaining untouched the present Corn Law, and for permitting a state of law to exist whereby a duty of 17s. attaches to the import of foreign wheat, such a degree of odium would have attached to the landed interest, if that battle had been fought, as would have done them the greatest injury (cheers). What were the facts which came under the cognizance of my Right Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, charged with the responsibility of providing for the public peace, and rescuing millions from the calamity of starvation? What were the facts brought daily under our consideration? We knew the fact that in one part of this empire there are 4,000,000 of Queen's subjects dependent on a certain article of food for subsistence (hear, hear). It was difficult to say what was the extent of the danger—what would be the progress of the disease, and what the amount of deficiency in the supply of that article of food (hear). But surely you will make allowances for those who were charged with the heaviest responsibility, supposing there were a great calamity. We saw, at the distance of three or four months, the gaunt forms of famine, and of disease following in the train of famine.

Was it not our duty then to the country and to party, to take precaution that we should not be charged with neglecting such a calamity? (hear, hear). I believed that it was impending, and I wish that my anticipations were likely not to be realized (hear, hear). I will refer to some documents, if the subject is not distasteful, as it seemed to be when I last mentioned it; for you appeared to dislike a reference to letters, and turned away from communications. But it is absolutely necessary, before you come to a final decision on this question, that you should understand this Irish case (cheers). You must do so (renewed cheers). I cannot conciliate your confidence by any expression of regret for the course I have taken, So far from it, that I declare in the face of this House that that day of my public life, which I look back on with the greatest satisfaction and pride is that 1st of November last, when I was ready to take the responsibility of issuing an order in Council to open the ports, trusting to you for an approval of that step (loud cheers). I wished then, that by the first packet which sailed after the 1st of November the news might have gone forth that the ports were open. The primary object of such a measure, of course, would have been to increase the supply of food, and to take precautions against famine, although other collateral advantages might have flown from it (hear, hear). I think that the best step then to have taken would have been to open the ports; and supposing that our anticipations had proved incorrect—supposing that we had formed a false estimate of this danger—I believe that the generosity of Parliament would have protected us from harm (cheers, and cries of “hear, hear,” from the Protection benches). That would have been the case had our anticipations proved to be wrong; but what was the fact? During the latter part of December and January, there was a temporary suspension of alarm. I never shared in the prophetic hopes that there would be abundance of food, that the potato disease was exaggerated, and that we might safely trust to existing supplies, after the opinions we had received from men eminent in science (hear, hear). I felt that the time would arrive when the opinions of those individuals would be justified (hear, hear). Well, now, what is the fact? I will read to you some communications, not so much for the vindication of the Government as for the guidance of your course. It is not right that I should leave you in ignorance of what are the real facts of this case (“hear, hear,” accompanied by an observation from some Hon. Member). The present proposition is not a suspension of the duties, it is true; but it is a virtual suspension. It comprehends the removal of the duty on maize, rice, and the reduction of the duty to a nominal amount on barley and oats, and the reduction of the duty on wheat to 4s. Some are of opinion that the plan would be better if the duty were reduced to nothing; but still it amounts to a virtual removal of the duty on corn with the exception of wheat (hear, hear). Before you decide on rejecting this measure, well consider the reports which the last few days have brought from Ireland (hear, hear). You seemed to discredit the reports of official authorities, and some, I regret to say, countenanced the notion that public men would be acting in concert for the purpose of

exaggeration. I will now read, therefore, no official reports. I will read letters, which the last two mails have brought from Ireland, not from official authorities, but from men from whose statements you cannot have the pretence of withholding confidence (hear, hear). I will read a communication from Sir David Roche, who was sometime member for the city of Limerick. He was one of those who thought the apprehension of famine to be greatly exaggerated, and that great precautions were unnecessary. This day has brought me this letter from him, dated Carass, near Limerick, Feb. 11:—

“No person was more disposed than I was to look with hope to that part of the potato crop in this country that appeared sound before Christmas. I thought it was quite safe and certain to keep in the usual way, and in my answer to the Lord Lieutenant’s circular I stated that hope with great confidence, adding that the crop was so large, the sound portion would nearly feed the people.” (This, then, is a disinterested authority). “But I grieve to say that every day convinces me of the error I was under; the potatoes that were apparently sound then, had more or less the disease in an incipient state, and the greater part is now obliged to be given to pigs and cattle to save the owners from total loss. The Catholic clergy of several parishes have made this painful communication to me; my own experience as a landed proprietor and a practical farmer, holding in my possession large arable farms in three different parts of this county, and also in the county Clare, entirely corresponds with their statements. I don’t think by the 1st of May next, that out of 100 acres of potatoes on my land, sound seed will be left me for next year’s crop.

“If the case is so bad with me, and it is nearly the same in the four districts I allude to, how much worse must it be with the poor, who have not the convenience and aid that large farming establishments, with substantial buildings, can command? In short, as one rides through the country, rotten potatoes are to be seen everywhere in large quantities by the side of the roads; pits, lately turned, in most cases much smaller than the heaps of rotten potatoes alongside them; and those in the pits are certain, if not quickly consumed, to share in the general decay.

“Such, Sir, is the state I may say of the entire country. No doubt for six or seven weeks, while the remains of the potatoes last, destitution will not be general; but I pray you, Sir, look to it in time.”

We did look to it in time (hear, hear). That is the account of the county of Limerick, I now come to the Queen’s county. The following is a copy of the Constabulary Report received February 12, 1846:—

“QUEEN’S COUNTY, STRADBALLY, February 11, 1846.

“With reference to the potato disease I beg to state that I was requested by Sir Edward Walsh and Sir A. Weldon, two magistrates of this district, to make a more searching inquiry into the state of the potatoes in the neighbourhood of the collieries than had hitherto

been made. The instructions were, to make the examination by properties, and ruled forms were supplied by Sir A. Weldon, with such headings as he considered applicable to the case.

"On Monday morning, the 9th, I proceeded to Wolfhill, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Emerson, the clergyman of the parish, and commenced with the property of Mr. Hovenden. Mr. Hovenden himself being with us, we examined every house on the property, took down the number of each family, the quantity of potatoes planted, and the quantity (from actual inspection) now remaining on hand, with the quantity of oats or other grain now in the possession of the family. On Tuesday we went over the property of Sir Charles Coote, adjoining Mr. Hovenden's, and also over Mr. Carter's, and so far as time would admit, examined a few families on the property of Mrs. Kavanagh, of Gracefield. Our inquiries extended to about 190 families altogether, and enable me with the most perfect accuracy to state the frightful extent to which the destruction of the potato crop has proceeded in that part of the country. Many families whom we visited, and who had planted sufficient for their ordinary wants, including the seed necessary for the ensuing season, have not had a potato of any kind for the last month." (Observe, this is in the month of February, five months at least before there can be any supply from the natural bounty of Providence.) "Others have lost nearly all; and the few that still remain are totally unfit for human food. In every instance where we saw potatoes in pits in the fields we had them examined, and with scarcely an exception, we found them to be a mass of putrefaction, perfectly disgusting, even to look at. We examined a few houses on the property of Sir Thomas Esmonde, where the land is of much better quality, but the result was in every case the same. There are literally no potatoes remaining in that part of the country.

"I understand the magistrates intend to meet on an early day, and make some representation through the Lieutenant of the County on the above subject.

"W. W. HEMSWORTH, Sub-Inspector 1st Rate."

I go to Waterford. These are letters received within the last two days; and here is one from the Lord-Lieutenant of that county—Lord Stuart de Decies. It is dated the 10th of February; I entreat the attention of the House to it. Lord Stuart de Decies is a person whose statements will carry with them full authority. He sends certain statements, and says,—

"His Excellency will find in these statements an announcement of the alarming fact that in two districts alone of the Union in question there are even at this early period of the year, no less than 300 persons whose stores of provisions are upon the point of becoming exhausted. In the meanwhile the rot is represented as making daily progress amongst the potatoes, which until lately it was hoped might have been preserved in a state of partial soundness for some time longer, and there is every reason, therefore, to anticipate that the distress now prevailing in certain localities will very speedily cause its pressure to be felt by the labouring classes throughout the union.

With this prospect in view, the probability is that a rise in the price of all kinds of grain may be expected to take place in the course of the ensuing spring and summer months, although foreign supplies were to be admitted immediately duty free, and thus the facilities of providing food for the people in exchange for their labour be removed beyond the means which landed proprietors have at the present moment within their reach for this purpose. It is in these circumstances that I would venture respectfully to submit, as far as the interests of the county of Waterford are involved, that much good might be effected in keeping down prices by the establishment of Government Corn Stores, from which grain might be purchased at first cost price in such towns as Youghal, Dungarvan, Waterford, Carrick, Clonmel, and, perhaps, Lismore. In all but the last mentioned of these towns there is an adequate military force for the protection of such granaries, if established, and no part of the county would then be beyond 12 or 14 miles distance from a depot, whence food on moderate terms might be drawn to those localities which stood in need of a supply" (hear, hear).

The next I read is from Kerry, dated the 9th of February, from a gentleman whose statements I believe are entitled to the highest respect—Mr. Thomas Dillon :—

"I regret to have to report, for the information of Government, that serious ravages have been made latterly on the potatoes by the disease which, for the last two months, was supposed at least not to be progressive. Having gone round my district within the last ten days, I have had opportunities not only of hearing, but of witnessing the destruction which has been committed, and which is gaining ground rapidly, contrary to the hopes which have been for some time cherished, as to excite the utmost alarm among all classes; and for my own part I feel almost confounded at the difficulty that must exist in procuring a sufficiency of good seed for the ensuing crop."

Such is the report of Mr. Dillon, of Cahirciveen, resident magistrate (hear, hear). The House is aware that there has been sitting for some time past in Dublin a commission, one of whose duties it has been to collect accurate information with respect to the extent of the deficiency in different localities. That commission has lately made a report, but the report refers to a period antecedent to that in which this disease has reappeared. I have here an official statement, from the highest authority, embracing almost every part of Ireland, every electoral district, with the exception of 99, having sent returns; and these are the facts reported by the commissioners:—  
 "That in four electoral divisions the loss of potatoes has been nearly nine-tenths of the whole crop; in 93, between seven-tenths and eight-tenths; in 125, the loss approaches to seven-tenths of the whole crop; in 16, it approaches to six-tenths; in 596, nearly one-half of the crop is entirely destroyed; and in 582 divisions, nearly four-tenths of the crop are entirely destroyed" (hear, hear). Here are requisitions made to us, and we are acting upon them, to establish stores of corn for the people (hear, hear), at low prices,

or giving it in remuneration for labour (an Hon. Member—It will be wanted for seed). Yes, to get seed from foreign countries for the ensuing year is next to impossible. An eighth of the whole crop is required for seed; each acre of potatoes requires nearly a ton, three-fourths of a ton, at least, for seed; take the tonnage which it would require to bring in 10,000 tons of potatoes from any part of Europe where potatoes may still abound; it is almost impossible to supply the deficiency (hear). You must look for seed to the accumulation, by making savings from the existing crop. It may be necessary for you to form that saving. When the pressure of famine is severe the immediate want will be supplied, the danger of next year will be forgotten; the Government must interfere for the purpose of encouraging the saving in sufficient quantities, in order to secure a supply of seed for next year. How are we to do this? Why, by the substitution, I suppose, of some other articles of provision to be given under wise regulations for the purpose of preventing waste, and of getting these seed potatoes in exchange. I ask, you, then, if in May next we had to come down here, proposing large votes of public money, and if we were encouraging the clergy of the church, and the clergy of the Roman Catholic persuasion, and telling them, "Individual charity in your localities must supply more than the Government can supply; you must give corn in exchange for these potatoes, or for the sustenance of human life":—could I have stood here, proposing votes of £200,000 or £300,000, and encouraging the charity of those who had little to dispense in charity, and would it have been tolerated, that at the same moment we should have been retaining a duty of 17s. on the introduction of corn? (loud cheers). Could I have allowed you to call for these returns—could I have read to you this account of the state of Ireland, that in 600 electoral divisions only half the crop has been saved, and in 600 more only three-fifths, while in some eight-tenths are gone? (hear, hear). Suppose famine should ensue? Do you believe, that it would be for the credit and honour of the landed aristocracy of this country to say, "We throw upon the Government the responsibility of taking security, but not one letter of the existing Corn Law shall be abandoned?" (cheers). Would that be fidelity to the landed interest? No; I believe that whatever might have been the seeming consistency that proposal would have been the real "treachery" which you impute to me, because I have thought it for your interest, and the interests of all, to relieve ourselves from the odium of stipulating for these restrictions in such a moment of pressure (renewed cheers). What would have been said? Why, the pressure in Holland and in Belgium is not half so severe; and see what the Government in those two countries did at an early period. In Belgium the executive Government took upon itself the responsibility of opening the ports to every description of provisions. The Government of Holland exercised the power which it had by orders. Belgium is an agricultural country; the Chambers met—Lords and Commons; the Government asked for indemnity, and for the continuance of the law; without a moment's hesitation, by acclamation as it were, without one dissentient voice, the representatives of the landed interest in Belgium gave the Government

indemnity and continued precaution against the incursions of famine (hear, hear). Under similar circumstances, what has been the course taken by Parliament here? What has been the course taken by Parliaments deeply interested in the welfare of agriculture? There have been times before when there has been the apprehension of scarcity in this country; what has been the remedy? What has been the remedy that the heart of every man suggested? (hear, hear). What has been the remedy that the legislative wisdom took? Why, in every case, without exception, the removal for a time of the duties upon corn (cheers, and counter cheers). (An Hon. Member—What—at the end of the time?) I will come to that immediately. I rejoice in the cheer which I met from that quarter (looking to the Protection benches); what is it but an assent, apparently a unanimous assent (“No,”), at any rate a very general assent that at a period of impending famine, the proper precaution to be taken is to encourage the free importation of food (hear, hear). I have a right to infer, that if that had been the proposal, namely, that existing duties upon corn and other articles of provision should be suspended, that proposal would have met with general assent (cheers). Then, if that be so, I ask you to expedite the passing of this bill (laughter and cheers), or to move as an amendment that the duties upon all articles of provision shall forthwith be suspended (renewed cheers). I will not omit the other consideration, what you ought to do after you have suspended the law; I am only trying now to convince you that I should have been unfaithful and treacherous to the landed interest if I had concealed the real pressure of this Irish case, and had been talking about “hoisting the flag of Protection” (hear), or “rousing the British lion” (laughter and cheers), or “adhering to the True Blue colour” (renewed laughter and cheers), or maintaining the Corn Laws “in all their integrity” (cheers). I am trying to convince you by fair reasoning, that that is a course which would not have been consistent either with the public interest or with the credit of the landed proprietors. That is all I am asking you now to allow. If you say, “We will suspend this law until next harvest,” no doubt you may; but I am rejoiced to have the admission from three-fourths of those by whom I shall be opposed, that it would not be wise to stipulate for the present that no alteration should be made, that no maize should be admitted, that no rice should be admitted, that no oats should be admitted, and that the duty upon wheat should be maintained at 17s; I am rejoiced that I have established to the satisfaction of the great majority that that would not have been a prudent or a defensible course (hear). I say it would not, because at all periods of our history the natural precaution that has been taken has been the admission, without distinction, of foreign corn in times of scarcity. I must quote some of those instances. In 1756 there was the apprehension of famine; Parliament was assembled; the first act was, unwisely I think, to prohibit the exportation of corn; the second was to permit importation duty free. In 1767 you were again threatened with scarcity; the first act of the Parliament was to admit provisions duty free. In 1791 Parliament altered the Corn Laws—they established a new Corn Law; in 1793 there was the apprehension of scarcity; notwithstanding the new Corn Law, one

of the very first acts upon the statute book is to remove all duties upon the importation of foreign corn. In 1795 there was an apprehension of famine again, or rather of scarcity, severely pressing upon some classes of the community; and in that year, and in 1796, the same remedy was adopted—the removal of all duty upon foreign corn. In 1799 the same course was pursued, and free importation allowed. Why then, I ask, with all these precedents in times when the danger was greatly less than it is at present, would it have been wise for a Government to counsel that we should pursue a different course, refuse facilities for importation, and determine upon maintaining the existing law? (hear, hear). Sir, I believe that course would have involved the Government and the Parliament in the greatest discredit; and so far from being enabled to maintain the existing law, my firm belief is, that it would have been encumbered with a degree of odium which would have made the defence of it impossible (hear, hear). It was upon these grounds that we acted, seeing what had been done in neighbouring countries, and what had been uniformly done by your own Parliament, not when corn was at 100s. or 80s., but in periods when it was under 60s.—that the remedy for scarcity was opening the ports for the admission of foreign corn. Do not answer me by saying, “They had a different Corn Law then—there was no sliding scale—there was no admission at a low duty when the price was high?” It was exactly the reverse of this; during the whole of that period, when corn was at 54s., it was admitted at a duty of 6d.; the law made provision for the free importation of corn. And why did Parliament interfere? It was in order that the high duty should not attach. When corn was below 54s., there was a duty of from 2s. 6d. to 24s. 3d.; when it was above 54s., the duty was 6d.; by the natural operation of the law, therefore, corn was admitted, but there was a fear that, from a sudden importation from neighbouring ports, corn might fall below 54s., and the high duty might attach. To prevent that, and to give a guarantee to the foreign importer that he should be certain for a period of six months to have his corn admitted at 6d., Parliament interposed and came to that decision (hear, hear). If we had refused to interfere, what a contrast might have been drawn between us and those Parliaments! Would it have been for the credit either of Parliament or of Government? I think not (cheers). We advised therefore—at least I advised, and three of my colleagues at the time I have referred to advised—the immediate suspension of the law (hear, hear). But the question is what shall we do now? (hear, hear). The law is not suspended (hear, hear), Parliament is sitting. It would be disrespectful towards Parliament for the Executive to take any step; it is impossible for the Executive, except by an Order of Council, to do that which might be done by an extreme exercise of authority, when Parliament is not sitting; it would not be constitutional to do it (hear). What is it now that we invite you to do? (hear). But it may be true that the time has passed away; that the 1st of November was a better period for doing this than now.—Yes, but admitting that, the necessity for proceeding on the 16th of November is only increased (hear, hear). True, the supplies might have been more ample, but you have six months yet (hear, hear), and what is the

choice you have to make? If any one dissents from that which we propose, let him propose another. You must make your choice. You must either maintain the existing law, or make some proposal for increasing the facilities of procuring the benefit of foreign articles of food (hear, hear). And now I come to that second consideration from which I said I would not shrink (hear). After the suspension of the existing law, and the admission of foreign importation for a period of eight months, what do you propose to do with the existing Corn Laws? (hear, hear.) That is, of course, the question which any man would have to consider who advised the suspension of the Corn Laws (hear, hear). Well, my conviction is so strong that it would be utterly impossible, after establishing perfect freedom of trade for a period of eight months, to permit the existing Corn Law to come into operation at the end of it—my conviction is so strong that it would be impracticable and impolitic, that I could not entertain such an idea (hear, hear). I know it may be said, “We will have a temporary suspension of the law, and that the law itself will revive by its own operation (hear). Give us suspension now, and at the end of that suspension we will have the Corn Laws as they are now” (hear, hear). But I think it is an utter misapprehension of the state of public opinion to suppose it to be possible that after this country, for eight months, should have tasted of the freedom of importation without restriction you could by any power revive either by its own principle or by enactment the existing Corn Law (hear, hear). What! would you revive the existing Corn Law in all its provisions? Would you not refuse the admission of maize? because maize is prohibited by the existing Corn Law. Now, this thing dwelt on the minds of myself and my Right Hon. Friends near me—Shall we suspend the law, and then try a modified Corn Law? (hear, hear.) You might have admitted maize and kept up protection for all other articles (hear, hear). Well now, do not disregard public opinion in matters of this kind (hear, hear). Do not let feeling overbear the deliberate conviction of reason, but depend upon it that when questions of food are concerned, public opinion cannot safely be disregarded (hear, hear). But the present Corn Law duty upon maize varies with the duty on barley. It was proposed last session to admit maize free of duty. The price of barley was falling—the duty on barley was increasing, and without the slightest natural connexion between maize and barley, the duty on maize was increasing also. Then, might not the law be altered in that respect? Yes. But remember this, that in the course of last session notice was given that maize should be imported duty free, because it was desirable to have maize for food for cattle (hear). Do you think it possible, in devising a new Corn Law, to devise one, the leading principle of which should be this, that maize should come in duty free, because the admission of that article would be for the benefit of the farmer, as he might feed his cattle and pigs with it, but that there are certain other articles used for consumption by human beings (hear, hear), and in respect to them the law shall be maintained in all its force? (hear, hear). Do you advise us now to fight that battle (hear, hear). I am assuming now that the necessity for the suspension of the law has been estab-

lished on account of a great emergency—that suspend all duties taken place, would you deliberately advise the Government as an apprehension of the public interests, or for the sake of party pressing upon give a guarantee that the existing Corn Law at that time in 1796, the that suspension should be revived? (hear.) Do you think that foreign corn, that very fact of suspension would constitute a new edition allowed. consideration of things, and would give a tenfold still the danger agitation that previously existed? (hear.) Do you invite a wise for a that battle now? What would be the state of feeling upon that course, subject? Do you invite us to suspend the law with a guarantee maintaining revival? (hear.) Can any man be insensible to the fact that you would have opinion, not among politicians, which you are apt to attest dis-some interested or corrupt motives; but I ask you to look at the existing law, opinions that have been expressed—to the sincerity of which there are conclusive proofs have been given by some of the most honourable men that ever sat upon these benches (hear, hear). Did my Noble Friend Lord Ashley vacate his seat for the county of Dorset from any interested or corrupt motives? (hear, hear.) Did my Hon. Friend Mr. Sturt, or my Hon. Friend Mr. W. Patten, avow their change of opinion from any interested or corrupt motives? Did my Hon. Friend Mr. Egerton vacate his seat for Cheshire, or my Noble Friend Lord Henniker vacate his seat for Suffolk, from any other than a real change of opinion—from a conviction that the time was come for the Repeal of the Corn Laws? (hear.) Did that young Member of this House, Mr. Charteris, who showed as high and honourable a spirit as ever animated the breast of an English gentleman—(hear, hear)—accompanied with great acuteness and intelligence—did he abandon his seat for Gloucester from any interested or corrupt motive? (hear, hear.) Did Mr. Dawnay vacate his seat from any corrupt or interested motive? (hear, hear.) Now, these are proofs that the Minister who suspends that law, with the guarantee of the revival of it when the period of that suspension was over would have had enormous difficulties to contend with (hear, hear). But let us take the course of the present debate, the admissions and expressions of opinion of those who have been loudest in their condemnation of the Government. The first I notice is the Hon. Member for Huntingdon (hear, hear, and a laugh). Well, I confess I was surprised at some of the opinions entertained by that Hon. Gentleman in respect to a Repeal of the Corn Law (hear, and a laugh); but would that Hon. Gentleman follow me in defence of the existing Corn Law after the suspension of it? So far from it, the Hon. Gentleman thinks it is just the time for making a compromise on the subject (hear, hear) for a new Corn Law. Well, he would have abandoned me then, if, after the suspension, I had undertaken a guarantee to revive the existing Corn Law (hear). That is quite true. He says the time is just arrived for a compromise. Why, if ever there was an unfortunate moment for a compromise it is the present (hear, and laughter). Now, what is the meaning of a compromise? Is it a new Corn Law? Well, what is the security for the maintenance of that? (ironical cheers from the Protection benches). What would be the security for that? (hear, hear.) What says every Hon. Gentleman who has appeared on the part of the

choice you have? Agriculturists? He says that the agriculturist wishes for permanence as  
 proper, let the Corn Laws. Well, then, can any one say that agriculture would  
 You must either be provided with permanence as to the Corn Laws by a mere alteration  
 for increasing those laws to take effect after the period of suspension was over?  
 of that (hear, hear, hear). Now I am considering whether, after that period of sus-  
 pension, it would be possible for a prudent man to invite this House  
 to state with certainty that the Corn Laws should be revived. What  
 would be the state of parties? (hear, hear.) I will only take now  
 the loudest and most vigorous advocates for protection, and I am  
 referring to the prospect there would be for the Corn Laws to be  
 revived, after their suspension was proposed, not only with reference  
 to the opinions on that, but also on this side of the House (hear,  
 hear). There is the Hon. Member for Roxburghshire, he was the  
 loudest (a laugh). The Hon. Member for Roxburghshire has a  
 curious notion of the relation between a country and its Minister  
 (hear, hear), and between the Sovereign and the Minister of that  
 Sovereign; and the Hon. Gentleman likened me to a hired advo-  
 cate in a particular cause (hear, and a laugh). And he said I had  
 thrown up the brief; but perhaps the Hon. Gentleman is not aware  
 that a Minister takes an oath, which constitutes a material difference  
 between his position and that of an advocate in a legal cause (hear,  
 hear). A Minister takes an oath that in all matters to be debated  
 and discussed in Council, he will freely and unreservedly deliver his  
 opinion, according to his heart and conscience (hear). Why, I  
 apprehend that an obligation of that kind constitutes a material  
 difference from the office of a fee'd counsel (laughter); and the  
 Hon. Gentleman who said I had been sent here to defend the old  
 Corn Laws, that I had made a terrible breach in 1842, but that I  
 was bound at any rate, by every consideration of consistency and  
 honour, to maintain the corn laws of 1842, what was the admission  
 he made as to what would be the case before he got to the close of  
 his suspension? He said, "I must admit, that in my own county,  
 within the last three years, there have been such improvements made  
 in roads, such introduction of science into agriculture, such facilities  
 for introducing cheap corn, that in my opinion the time is come when  
 the present Corn Laws must be altered" (hear); and when I asked  
 the Hon. Gentleman, "Whom are you counsel for?" meaning that  
 if any obligation was imposed on me to maintain the Corn Law of  
 1842, I could not quite understand why the Hon. Gentleman could  
 so readily abandon it; the Hon. Gentleman was perfectly indignant  
 at being supposed to be a counsel claiming the functions of Anachar-  
 sis Cloots! who said he was attorney-general for the human race  
 (laughter); and the Hon. Gentleman said, "I counsel,—that is an  
 imputation on my honour. I am counsel for the agriculturists—I am  
 counsel for the commercial interests—I am counsel for the whole  
 country—I am counsel for the interests of humanity" (laughter).  
 All my aim is to have functions not quite so comprehensive; but to  
 be the counsel for all the great interests of this country, regarding  
 them as superior to all party engagements; and in times of great  
 public difficulty to give that advice which in my heart and conscience  
 I believe to be the best for the public good. Well, the next was  
 the Hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne. The Hon. Member

for Newcastle-under-Lyne informs me that hereafter, and for ever, he withdraws his confidence from me (laughter). He stands upon this ground—that I established no great principle in respect of the Corn Laws. If there ever was a man who had less reason than another to censure a Minister for not establishing a principle, it is the Hon. Gentleman himself (a laugh). Why he has voted with the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. C. P. Villiers), and he has voted against him (great laughter). He is an advocate for a fixed duty, but he has done all he could to maintain a sliding scale (a laugh). I do not know whether the Hon. Gentleman has shared in my misfortune, and read the pamphlet of Mr. John Colquhoun, of Killermont (loud and continued laughter). I must say that that pamphlet, as far as I can understand it, advocates repeal of the Corn Laws (a laugh). If, then, the Hon. Gentleman has voted with the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton, and has voted against him (laughter); if he is a determined supporter of a fixed duty, and yet ever since 1842 has done all in his power to maintain the sliding scale; and if my construction of his pamphlet be correct, and he is an advocate of repeal, I wonder how I should have fared with him if I had laid down a great principle (laughter). I wonder what the Hon. Gentleman would have said if after having carried suspension, I should have subsequently declared that at the end of that suspension the Government would stake its existence on the revival of the existing Corn Law (hear). I venture to say there would not have been a more strenuous opponent of such a course than the Hon. Gentleman; at least, I venture to say, there never was a gentleman so clamorous for the announcement of a principle who pursued a course which left him so completely at single anchor to vote for any proposal that might be made (laughter). I shall refer now to the opinions of a Noble Lord who has not taken part in the present debate—the Noble Lord the Member for Newark (Lord J. Manners), who has addressed a letter to his constituents on this subject. Now, would it have been possible for the Government to rely upon that Noble Lord's support, if they had taken the course I have mentioned, that of advising a renewal of the Corn Law upon suspension? This is the Noble Lord's opinion on the question:—"The conclusion to which I have come is that sanctioned by the authority of the late Lord Spencer and other practical agriculturists, and may be stated in the emphatic words of the *Agricultural Gazette*:—"Upon the best of our unbiassed judgment, we humbly express a firm belief that both the advantages and the evils—in fact, the whole effect—of the expected change which the political journalists have bruited of late in our ears, has been absurdly magnified, as much by the ignorance as by the feelings and wishes of the combatants on both sides; and that of all the panic dreams that ever sat like a nightmare upon the energies of human enterprise, or cramped the sinews of a noble pursuit, the idea, in a densely inhabited country, where population is rapidly increasing, trade and commerce extending, industry and skill unequalled, and true science dawning, that human food is likely to become too cheap, and its production unprofitable, is the most unaccountable, and will be eventually found the most illusory and groundless.'" I do not know what course

the Noble Lord means to take with respect to the present measure. He says he is decidedly in favour of a repeal of the Corn Laws, but that he thinks the present Parliament ought not to enact, nor the present Minister to propose, such a measure (hear, hear). Well, but that personal objection (cheers from the Opposition benches) is no satisfactory answer to the country (hear, hear). The Hon. Member for Maidstone (Mr. A. Hope) said, "I will not ask whether the measure is right or wrong, but I will look to your conduct. I will give extracts from your speeches, and I will show that you ought not to propose it." But, after all, the question for the country is, is the measure right or wrong? (cheers). Is it right that the Corn Laws should be suspended, and that after such suspension an attempt should be made to revive them? If it be right, vote for such a proposal; if it be wrong, by all means withdraw your confidence from the Government (loud cheers); but surely you cannot justify voting against a measure which you believe to be right, and which concerns such mighty interests? ("hear" and renewed cheering.) Now, Sir, the Hon. Gentleman the Member for Somersetshire (Mr. W. Miles) made no such admissions as those which fell from the Hon. Member for Roxburghshire, and the Hon. Member for Huntingdon. I infer from his speech that he is for the maintenance of the existing law in its integrity ("hear, hear, from Mr. W. Miles). That Hon. Gentleman also gave me notice, that from henceforth I must not expect the renewal of his confidence. Of course I heard that statement without surprise; but, at the same time, I do implore the Hon. Gentleman and other Hon. Members, although they may visit these penal consequences upon us, to pass this measure, if they think it advisable at the present crisis (hear, hear). The Hon. Gentleman must excuse me for saying that, in closing his connexion with us, he has made one inaccurate statement. He has not always been a supporter of the Government. On the great question of "grease" (roars of laughter), he was our determined opponent (continued laughter). I will rob him of none of his laurels—not one. I proposed that the then existing duty on grease, an article extensively used in manufactures, should be remitted, and the Hon. Gentleman rose and said, "There must be a stop here."

"Hence! avaunt! 'tis holy ground."

(Great laughter). "Grease," said the Hon. Gentleman, "you shall not touch." And why? "Because," said he, "although the admission of grease might be beneficial to the manufacturers, I doubt the vigilance of the Custom-house officers, and I think some people would use the grease intended for manufacturers as butter (loud laughter). Now, I must say that I think the Hon. Gentleman, in taking his stand upon grease (a laugh), did much more injury than benefit to the cause of protection (hear, hear).

MR. W. MILES was understood to say that he had merely stopped the discussion at a late hour in order to obtain its adjournment.

SIR R. PEELE proceeded. I think the Hon. Gentleman on that occasion exhibited his qualifications for the post of a leader, by the discretion he evinced in being absent from the division (a laugh). Now the Hon. Gentleman must permit me, with perfect good humour,

to advert to two or three of his arguments the other evening. I listened to his speech with great attention, but it certainly appeared to me that he was handling edge tools (laughter). I had previously stated that the price of cattle and meat had not been diminished by the tariff; that the contracts for the present year had been entered into on higher terms than those of any preceding year. The Hon. Gentleman said I had omitted to state that during the last six months the number of cattle brought into Smithfield market had decreased by 250,000; that there had been an average weekly decrease in the London market of 10,000 sheep; and that the cattle had decreased in weight from 7 to 10 stone; that they were lean and ill-favoured kine. I find that only 12,000 sheep were brought over from Holland during the last year (as we understood the Right Hon. Baronet) in order to meet this deficiency, and does the Hon. Member think it would be possible or prudent, or that it would be for the advantage of the landed interest, to maintain a law which, when disease and defective food deprived our markets of 250,000 cattle, and caused the price of meat to rise extravagantly in our markets, would prevent the importation of some thousands of sheep from the continent in order to meet the deficiency.

MR. W. MILES said he had suggested that the duty on cattle should be regulated by weight, and not by numbers.

SIR R. PEEL continued—Then the Hon. Member must excuse me if I now refer to his remarks relative to the article of flax. When a duty of £10 a ton was imposed upon foreign flax, certain parishes in the county of Somerset grew flax. In the parish of Chisselburgh, 100 acres were devoted to the culture of that article. Now, what were the circumstances under which that cultivation was abandoned? Was it in consequence of the withdrawal of the duty? and at what period did it take place?

MR. W. MILES—After the last removal of the duty on flax.

SIR R. PEEL. Now, the last reduction of duty was only 2s. per cwt. (laughter). The duty on foreign flax was removed in 1824 (a laugh). At that time it was £10 a ton. A reduction was then effected to the nominal duty of 5d. a cwt., and in 1842 the duty was altogether abandoned. Was it the removal of this duty of 5d. a cwt. that involved the parishes of Aldcock and Chisselburgh in ruin? (a laugh). The Hon. Gentleman says, "See what has happened in these parishes in consequence of the reduction of the flax duty! Chisselburgh alone has lost more than £1,000; and this circumstance shews the effect of withdrawing protection to native industry." But let us see what has taken place in other important parts of the empire, in consequence of the withdrawal of the protection to native industry. You will find that in Ireland no culture is at this moment more profitable than that of flax; and you will find that this trade has become flourishing since the last remnant of protection was withdrawn (hear). The Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Miles) argues as we are all apt to argue; he takes some particular locality and says, "See what is the result of your plan here." It is clear that the discontinuance of the culture of flax in Chisselburgh and Aldcock is owing to other causes than those to which it is attributed by the Hon. Gentleman; but what, as I before

said, has been the effect of the withdrawal of the protection in Ireland? Why, you will find from the evidence attached to the report of Lord Devon's commission, that the production of flax in Ireland is more profitable than that of wheat; that flax, without protection, gives a better return than wheat with it (hear, hear). But what has been the effect upon the manufacturer? What was the state of the linen manufacture in Ireland before the removal of protection? I will assume, for the calculation, that a fixed amount of French cambrics and cambric handkerchiefs—say 1,000 dozens—has been imported into Ireland annually. Before the removal of the duty the manufacture of Irish as compared with French cambrics was as 100 to 1,000 dozens. In the next four years, from 1830 to 1834, the Irish manufacture was in the proportion of 300 to 1,000 dozens; from 1834 to 1838, as 900 to 1,000; from 1838 to 1842, as 4,000 to 1,000; and from 1844 to 1846, as 16,000 to 1,000 (hear, hear). Since the withdrawal of that protection great manufactures had arisen in the north of Ireland; and what was the result? Why, the great dealers of London waited on me the other day, and stated that whereas ten years ago, three-fourths of the cambrics and cambric handkerchiefs came from France, and one-fourth only from Ireland; in the last year the proportion was just reversed, one-fourth coming from France, and three-fourths from Ireland (hear, hear). So that it may be true that Chisselburgh has suffered; but coincident with that suffering, the removal of the protection from the culture of flax in Ireland has resulted in the prosperity of that culture, while, from the same cause, the linen manufactures of Ireland have prospered to an extent exceeding the expectations of the most sanguine friend to Ireland (hear, hear). Then, will you restore this duty on flax? (cheers). Sir, this debate has chiefly turned on the Corn Laws—but it is not necessarily a Corn Law debate. I propose a committee of the whole House to consider the principles of our commercial policy. No doubt the question of the Corn Laws would come before that committee, but it is quite open to you to reject my proposal on the subject of the Corn Laws, and to agree to all the others. So much has been said on the subject of the Corn Laws in the course of this debate, that I cannot avoid here recurring to it. Sir, Her Majesty's Ministers have proposed this measure in the belief that, in its present shape, it is the one most likely to ensure success. They have proposed that, at the end of three years, the duties on corn shall be repealed, or at least reduced to a nominal sum. I proposed that measure, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, in the sincere belief that it was likely to be more acceptable than any other to the agricultural interest. I proposed it in the belief that not merely would it be more acceptable to them, but that they would prefer it to immediate repeal (loud cheers). We accompanied that proposal with respect to the Corn Laws with another for encouraging the improvement of land, by advancing money for the purpose of drainage. I certainly thought, that as to many lands in this country, we should be in a better condition to compete with the foreigner if absolute repeal of the Corn Laws were postponed to the end of three years; but there would also be more opportunity for making arrangements, if

necessary, between landlord and tenant ; but, above all, considering what might be done by improvement in drainage, and the advantage that might be expected to be in that respect taken of the proposal of the Government. I thought also that, considering that Canada had now an advantage as to the admission of her corn, compared with the corn of foreigners, it would be more acceptable to Canada, and more for the interest of that colony, that some time should elapse before Canada corn came into direct competition with that of the United States. It was for those purposes, *bonâ fide* believing that the arrangement we proposed was a better one, and more likely to prevent panic, and one on the whole that was better for the agriculturists, that on the part of the Government I made the proposal. Believing it to be the best under the circumstances, it is my intention to adhere to it—that is to say, I propose it, and I will use all the legitimate means I can to give effect to it (hear, hear). But, Sir, it was intimated the other night by the Hon. Member for Somersetshire, that, speaking on the part of the agriculturists, he would greatly prefer immediate repeal to the proposal of the Government ; and that sentiment of his, as he turned round to his friends behind him, received apparently a very general concurrence (hear). Now, as I stated before, it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to adhere to their proposal. I have stated the reason why they will do it, why they are inclined to prefer it, considering especially the opportunity that it affords for improvement in drainage. But at the same time I also distinctly make this statement, that if the agricultural body are of opinion that it will be for their advantage, if they think that immediate repeal will be preferable to the deferred repeal which is the proposal of the Government (“hear,” from the Opposition benches), if, by an union with Hon. Gentlemen opposite, they should place me in a minority, then the only consideration which I shall bear in mind will be this:—What course can I best take to give effect to the law so amended at your instance? (loud cheers from the Opposition benches). I will do all I can to carry the proposition of the Government, I prefer it, I proposed it, believing it to be favourable to the agricultural interest. I do not say what course, speaking for myself, I might pursue. I do not say what effect success here might produce in another place, for which I have less means of answering than I have here ; but this I will say, that my opinion as to the policy of a final adjustment of the Corn Laws will remain unaltered, and I shall decidedly prefer immediate repeal, even though carried against me, to throwing this country into confusion by the rejection of this measure (loud cheers). Observe, I say it will be quite for myself to consider what course of personal conduct will be most conducive to the result I should have in view ; but this I do believe, that the final adjustment of this question is now a consideration paramount to all others (cheers). Now, I was asked what price corn would hereafter bear. I thought it was but natural to say, that it was very difficult for me to give a positive answer to that question ; that I thought the price must be affected by the variations of the seasons and other considerations, and I, therefore, could not undertake, nor, indeed, would past experience warrant me (a laugh),

in attempting to offer any guarantee in the way of opinion as to the probable price. But this I will say, that I think nothing could be more erroneous than to suppose that the interests of agriculture are naturally and immediately interwoven with the price of wheat ("hear, hear," from Lord J. Russell, and cheers from the Opposition benches). Now, I will attempt to demonstrate this. I don't anticipate that when the Hon. Gentleman the Member for Somersetshire talked of the countless wilds from which corn would come, he really meant seriously to say, that he feared all that enormous production. I will ask him to consider that the island of Jersey has for many years enjoyed Free Trade, and to look at the result. It has been said that corn was introduced from Odessa and Egypt into Malta in bond (they pay a duty), and when the Hon. Member quotes the price of corn in particular markets, he must also take into account the quality of that corn. If corn be introduced into Malta from Egypt and Odessa at a price of 31s., he should remember that that corn bears a price of 10s. less in the English markets, on account of its decided inferiority. It is, therefore, impossible to draw a just inference from the nominal price, without at the same time taking into account the quality of the corn. I therefore hope differently, and I shall be disappointed if there is any such great reduction in the price of wheat, in consequence of more extended importation, as seriously to injure the agricultural interest (hear, hear). But what I want to show is this—that agricultural prosperity has no necessary connexion with the price of wheat (hear, hear). Now observe what is admitted—that there never was a time when science was so much applied to agriculture, when such improvements were made in the cost of production, as in the last three or four years. The price of wheat seems to have a necessary tendency to decline in this country, apart altogether from all legislation. I will take decennial periods, commencing with the ten years ending in 1805. The average price of wheat for the ten years ending 1805, was 81s. 2½d.; for the ten years ending 1815, 97s. 6d.; ending 1825, 78s. 8d.; ending 1835, 56s. 7d.; and ending 1845, 57s. 11d. Now, what has been the average of the last four years, a period during which the greatest improvements have been made in the science of agriculture. The average of the last four years has been 51s. 10d. only (hear). The average of fifty years, from 1791 to 1841, was 68s. 7d., and the price has fallen between 1815 and 1845, from 97s. 6d. to 51s. 10d. (hear, hear). And yet it is admitted that agricultural prosperity was never more marked, and that at no period were greater improvements made. And therefore if there should be still a continued fall in the price of wheat, do not of necessity impute it to the operation of the law, when it may be the effect of the improved agriculture. A very remarkable series of facts also presents itself in the amount of the rental of land as compared with the price of wheat. The gross rental of land in 1815, as taken from the property-tax return, was, £32,502,000. The price of wheat for the five years ending in 1815, was 102s. 5d. For the five years ending with 1842, the price of wheat was 64s. 7d., while the gross rental of land in England had increased to £37,794,000 (hear, hear). Thus, coincident with a fall in the price of corn, there was an increase in the rental of land

(hear, hear). I admit that there was a change in the currency (hear, hear); but, then, you must recollect, if you take 10 per cent. off in the one case, you must take it off in the other; so that the result, as far as the argument is concerned, is the same. If you deduct 10 per cent. from the price of the first five years on account of depreciated currency, the price will be 92s. 2d.; but we must also deduct 10 per cent. from the gross rental of the first five years, which will reduce it to £29,250,000 (hear, hear). Sir, a speech was made during this debate of very great ability. I allude to that of the Hon. Gentleman the Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. Stafford O'Brien). However opposed I might be to the arguments of that speech, I cannot do otherwise than acknowledge its ability. But what was the argument of the Hon. Gentleman? The Hon. Gentleman told us, that after this law was passed, the tenant-farmer would come to his landlord, and would address him somewhat after this manner—that he would say to the landlord, “I cannot afford to pay the high rent I have hitherto paid. The bones of my forefathers have been collected in the church-yard of this ancient parish. It is most painful to me to quit this, the residence of my ancestors, who were the forefathers of this hamlet, and to seek my fortune in another country.” And the Hon. Gentleman (making a great impression on this House, from the pathetic tone in which his speech was delivered) proposed that the landlord should make a speech to the tenant on the occasion. He was to say—“My good fellow,” (laughter, as the Right Hon. Baronet spoke in the tone of voice in which Mr. S. O'Brien had used the same words)—“My good fellow! it is true that your forefathers lived in this parish, and that there has been an intimate relation between your ancestors and mine; but the principles of Free Trade are prevailing. I can purchase the articles of my consumption at a cheaper rate. I must deal with you on the same principle. The land you occupy produced only three-quarters per acre, and that with the application of capital and skill, it might be made to produce five quarters; and there is a gentleman connected with the Anti-Corn Law League”—

MR. S. O'BRIEN—No, no! (laughter).

SIR R. PEEL—I wish the Hon. Gentleman could make the speech over again for himself (a laugh). He said, however, “A gentleman connected with the manufacturing districts (not the Anti-Corn Law League), is ready to come and take your farm” (Opposition cheers). Now, Sir, I would suggest another, and I think a better, speech to be made by this landlord (laughter). I would have him say, “My good fellow!”—(another burst of laughter, as in the former case). “My good fellow! we both started with this advantage, our forefathers have been buried in the church-yard of this parish. The fortunes of your forefathers were intimately connected with those of mine. It is possible that a stranger might outbid you in this farm—under these protective laws your farm, which ought to produce five quarters, only produces three, and public opinion will hardly tolerate this, that there shall be no foreign corn imported, but that the fertility of our own soil shall be made to be sufficient; we, therefore, must take some measures to increase the produce from your farm. But I have the advantage of the new tariff, I am able to

purchase my commodities at a lower rate, and I intend to apply the amount of that saving to your assistance, and to the improvement of your land (cheers and laughter). I won't, therefore, turn you out of your farm ; I won't let manufactures come here ; but it is for your interest and mine that the land should bear five quarters, as it ought, and not three. You have not the capital and science which are necessary for this ; you want it ; I will assist you to procure it, and to improve your land ; I will assist you in the education of your son, to enable him to assist you. I will cut down the trees which encumber your fields ; and let you and I together keep out this foreign invader. You have the industry, I have the capital ; let us improve this farm ; let it be handed down to your son and mine in an improved state ; there shall be five quarters where there were three before. That will be for the benefit of both landlord and tenant ; and your sons and mine shall be buried, as our forefathers were, in our own church-yard" (cheers). And suppose the tenant said, "But this is a labourer's question?" I should answer, "Then, my good fellow, if we make this land which now produces three quarters produce five quarters, we shall employ more labourers (cheers). There will be a greater demand for labour, and all parties will be benefited. The estate will be benefited, the guarantee for the rent will be improved ; your comfort will be increased ; there will be more labour employed, and all this by the application of a little of that saving which the Hon. Gentleman says the rich are to derive from the tariff I introduced" (loud cheers). But as I said before, this is no mere Corn Law question. The question is this,—Her Majesty made surely no unreasonable demand. Her Majesty has thus addressed you :—"I recommend you to take into your early consideration whether the principles on which you have acted may not with advantage be yet more extensively applied, and whether it may not be in your power, after a careful review of the existing duties upon many articles, the produce or manufactures of other countries, to make such further reductions and remissions as may tend to ensure the continuance of the great benefits to which I have adverted." And you promised you would do this (cheers). The answer this House returned gave no pledge. The address was purposely worded not to give a pledge, but it gave this assurance—that "in compliance with her Majesty's recommendation we will take into our early consideration whether the principles on which we have acted may not with advantage be yet more extensively applied, and whether it may not be in our power, after a careful review of the existing duties upon many articles, the produce or manufactures of other countries, to make such further reductions and remissions as may tend to ensure the continuance of the great benefits to which her Majesty has adverted." How do you fulfil that assurance? Why will you refuse to go into committee at all? What is the amendment? Does it embody any great principle, as I expected it would from the early notice that was given by the Hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne. I expected he would have moved either that the Government was not entitled to the confidence of Parliament, or that native industry is entitled to Protection ; but what motion is

made now? Why, that not one of these questions currency (heard for six months to come; after a positive assurance was conveyed to her Majesty that you will take these matters into consideration, you determine there shall be no change. Do you then refuse to go into committee? Do you decide at once against the admission of foreign brandy? Do you decide at once against the admission of foreign silk? This amendment absolutely precludes the consideration in committee of any one of these questions (cheers). In point of fact, this is not a question of corn at all. There is a great principle at issue; the question is with respect to commercial policy; will you advance or recede? (loud cheers). The immediate proposal is, how will you stand still?—for six months to come, will you do nothing? I say, in this great country, to stand still is to retrograde (cheers). The carrying of this amendment is a reflection on the past course of the House of Commons. Every month you have been relaxing Protection; you say you will relax it no more, you will not listen to any proposals, the committee shall not be moved. Well, I do hope this House, which has been party to all these proposals, which passed the amended law of 1842, which simplified your commercial code, which consented to the tariff of 1842, which passed the Canada Corn Bill, which passed the amended tariff of last year, I do hope this House will not pass such a reflection on itself as to vote that the consideration of these measures be postponed for six months to come (cheers). That is the question at issue, whether you will advance in the relaxation of duties and the removal of prohibitions, or restore prohibitory duties, and increase protective duties (cheers). That is the question to be decided by the vote to which you are invited to come by the amendment of the Hon. Gentleman. Well, now, I offer this challenge. I never said that it was on the experience of the tariff for three years I had come to a change of opinion. I said this—that during three years I have seen coincident with abundance and low prices great prosperity; I have seen great contentment; I have seen the diminution of crime; I have seen the abatement of all social disorders; I have seen good health; I have seen increased commerce; and that experience of three years has convinced me that cheapness and plenty are at the foundation of your prosperity (loud cheers). I did not take the credit of this to the tariff—I said all I claimed for the tariff was this,—that, coincident with these great blessings, there have been constant relaxations of duties protective and prohibitory; it is impossible, therefore, to raise an objection to continued relaxations on account of the failure of the past (cheers). This is the challenge I offer, not connected with the tariff of the last three years alone, but with respect to the whole series of your relaxations of prohibitory duties—show me one relaxation, one removal of prohibition which has not contributed to the advantage of the great body of the consumers of this country (loud cheers). Nay, I go further,—I say, speaking of all great relaxations, show me one removal of prohibition, one relaxation of protective duties, which has not at an early period contributed to the welfare of the producer (cheers). I say I will show you that every removal of prohibition has contributed not only to the general interest, to the

purchase to the consumer—a paramount consideration, but proved to be at the same time perfectly consistent with the prosperity and increasing wealth of the producer (loud cheers). I have been ashamed to read some of the petitions which have been presented on this subject of Protection. There is a petition presented from ship-owners! (cheers). The petitioners represent that they are deeply interested in the prosperity of the shipping; and, in conclusion, they “invoke the wisdom of Parliament to check all further rash experiments on British navigation, and as an earnest of its sympathy with a branch of commerce indissolubly connected with national defence, they implore your Honourable House to reject the proposition for reducing the duty on the importation of foreign timber from 25s. to 15s., as proposed by her Majesty’s Government.” From shipowners! From the builders of ships! And then with the prayer to check all further rash experiments! What has been the issue of the rash experiment you made in 1842? You found then a discriminating duty of 45s., which you reduced to 25s. Have you destroyed the Canada trade? Has that rash experiment been destructive to the ship-owners? You reduced the duty on Canada timber to nothing; on Baltic timber you reduced the discriminating duty from 45s. to 5s. At the port of Liverpool the average tonnage in the British North American trade for 11 years preceding the reduction of the duty was 153,000 tons; and since you removed the duty on Canadian timber, the average has been 194,000 tons of shipping employed at Liverpool in the Canada trade. On the average of seven years before the reduction of duty 5,749,000 loads of pines were imported; in 1844 the quantity brought from Canada amounted to 6,211,000 loads; and in 1845 to 6,470,000 loads. Yet the ship-owners call on you to refuse a reduction of the duty on timber, as they called on you to refuse a reduction formerly from 45s. to 25s. And now what is the ground of complaint? There is one branch of the timber trade which has this year been very scantily supplied with those woods adapted for the construction of ships of the first class. So trifling has been the supply, that at the present moment this, one of the greatest maritime ports of the world, is in the anomalous position of not having in stock a single log of foreign wood—of Baltic timber—suitable for ship-building. We propose to give additional facilities for bringing Baltic timber to this country, in order that good ships may be built; and, concurrent with this, will be the increase of the Canada trade. And why? Just because the admission of foreign timber will give a stimulus to other branches of the trade, as the admission of Baltic timber at a reduced rate formerly occasioned an increased demand for Canadian timber. But you have a deficiency in that particular article which will build ships that shall endure for 12 years; and these were the circumstances under which you have the modest proposal made to leave the discriminating duty at its present amount of 25s., instead of reducing it to 15s.; and that is what the ship-owners of all things ask as essential so their interests (cheers). My Hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool made a long speech, in which he referred especially to our colonial policy. He alleged that I was going to sweep away the revenue by improvident reductions. On the

contrary, I am drawing a just distinction between duties for Protection and duties for revenue. I hope for an increased revenue with increased prosperity and increased consumption. I know the great interests involved in our colonies. Had I proposed that the discriminating duty on sugar or on coffee should be reduced, the charge would have been intelligible. But the whole of our policy has been to diminish Protection. You have reduced the duty on what you take from the colonies; you have reduced the duties upon your own commodities introduced into the colonies. What did you do in 1842? You said to the colonies, "The time is come for relaxing the duties which restricted your market. You have no access to slave labour. Well; but we permit you to get supplies of labour from other countries; and we reduce the duty on coffee when we make new regulations as to sugar." Has that injured the colonies? It was a wrong to the colonies to say that their attachment to the mother country depends on the maintenance of such ties. I propose prudently to proceed in the path which has led to prosperity hitherto and gradually to remove some of those protective duties. The Hon. Gentleman the Member for Nottingham was particularly severe upon the removal of protective duties on papers. I really don't know why there should be such a complaint. There is an Excise duty of  $\frac{1}{4}d.$  per square yard on papers fabricated in this country; and I propose that there shall be a duty on foreign paper just 400 per cent. above the domestic duty. I propose that as British pays  $\frac{1}{4}d.$ , foreign should pay  $2d.$  per yard. I know it is said our patterns are inferior to the foreign. But, depend upon it, there is nothing in the physical constitution of Englishmen to prevent them from drawing as good patterns. The Hon. Gentleman said, when you look out at the window you will see a vast number of paper-makers, carriage-makers, and others, and all crying out that they are ruined by those reductions. Why, there has not been a single alteration made in prohibitory or protective duties where the same argument has not been heard. I know it was used when the tariff was altered in 1842. We proposed to admit foreign potatoes at a moderate rate of duty. The potato growers of Yorkshire said, "We shall be ruined." In 1842 a reduction of the duty on hops from £8 11s. to £4 10s. What quantity came in at the latter rate? Two hundred weight. I have proposed that there shall be a reduction of the duty to £1 10s. A deputation of hop-growers were with me the other day, and said they would be ruined. I referred to the prophecy they had made in 1842, and showed them that the whole quantity introduced was not more than those 2 cwt. When Mr. Huskisson proposed an alteration of the silk duties, that great authority, Mr. Baring (Lord Ashburton) resisted the reduction, and said, "There were hundreds of thousands of poor honest men who knew nothing of the world of political economy, but who, because some very wise men had sprung up of late, were to be robbed of the earnings of their patient labours. There was to be only a duty of 30 per cent. protection against foreign competition. Would the House consent to a measure which must have the effect of driving all the workmen connected with it to the poor-rates for subsistence? When the French manufacturer maintained—as he (Mr. Baring) contended he would—his superiority, what would become of

his (Mr. Huskisson's) principles then? How was he to reconcile himself to the operation of a system which would drive to utter ruin and starvation the hundreds of thousands engaged in the silk trade throughout the United Kingdom?" One gentleman improved upon that, and said—"As for unbending, hard-hearted metaphysicians"—his language reminds me of some attacks which have been made upon another Minister (laughter)—"they exceeded the devil himself in point of malignity and contempt for the happiness of mankind?" Mr. Huskisson replied in these terms:—"I have been assailed and distressed by ungenerous appeals to my feelings, calling upon me to commune with my conscience and my God, and to say whether I am under no visitations of compunction and remorse. Good God! that man must have a heart of stone who can witness without sympathy and pain the distress which now exists among our manufacturers. I hope I am not wanting in the duties and feelings of a man. I have also a duty to perform as a Minister—to trace the causes of the present calamities, and to prevent, if possible, their recurrence." He therefore persevered; he removed the duty; and what was the result? Were hundreds of thousands of silk manufacturers thrown out of employment? Have the poor-rates been burdened for their subsistence? Have we been unable to compete with foreigners? In the decennial period ending in 1823, the quantity of silk entered for home consumption was 19,409,023lb.; for the ten years ending 1833, 39,681,248lb., immediately after the reduction of the duty: for the ten years ending 1843, 52,007,118lb. The aggregate annual consumption of the successive decennial periods was 1,940,000lb., for the ten years ending 1823; 8,968,124lb. for the ten years ending 1833; 5,200,711lb. for the ten years ending 1843, a further reduction of duty having taken place in 1842,—whereas now the consumption, which for the ten years ending in 1823 was 1,940,902lb., is now (for the single year 1844) 6,208,021lb. Which is the true philanthropist? Is it the man who cries out against the admission of French papers? Was it the man who cried out against the admission of French silks? Or, was it the Minister who said, "Good God! don't suppose I do not sympathise with distress. Don't load me with the reproach of causing ruin to thousands when I am endeavouring to benefit them." I have seen Spitalfields at the point of starvation; let me trace the causes of such calamities, and try whether by bringing in the free air of competition, I cannot diminish or remove the sources of such calamities. But have you been unable to compete with France? Why, you have sent more silk manufactures into that very country which has Lyons at the head of the silk trade, you sent more silk manufactures into France last year than you exported to the whole world beside in the years in which you were under the system of restriction (cheers). I could go through the whole of these details. I could go through timber, through silk, through other and inferior articles; but let me take only one, the article of foreign feathers. It seems a small article, but with respect to it I confess I was struck with the result, and you must recollect that your whole trade consists of an aggregate of small articles (hear, hear). In the year 1842 we reduced the duty on foreign feathers; at that time a manufacturer of those articles in which feathers are used, came to

spite of all your legislative precaution, may again recur; and let me revive in you the recollection of those years—the memory of the winter of 1841 and 1842, never can be effaced from my mind (hear, hear). Recollect the course we then pursued, when on every occasion on which the Sovereign met her Parliament, there was an expression of the deepest sympathy with the privations and sufferings of the people, accompanied by the warmest admiration of the patience and fortitude with which those sufferings were borne. Those times may recur; the years of plenteousness may pass away, the years of dearth may succeed; and if they do come, and if it should be our duty again to express our sympathy with suffering, and again to exhort to fortitude, I do ask every man who hears me to commune with his own heart and ask himself this question—“If these calamities do occur, if we must express sympathy with suffering, if we must repeat the exhortation to fortitude, will it not be a consolation that we have relieved ourselves from the heavy responsibility of regulating the supply of human food? Will not our expression of sympathy be more consolatory, our exhortation to fortitude more impressive, if we can at the same time say, and say with pride, in that time of comparative prosperity, urged by no necessity, yielding to no clamour, we anticipated this difficulty, and removed every impediment to the free circulation of the bounties of creation? (cheers). Will it not be a great and lasting consolation to us to be enabled to say to a suffering people,—“These are the chastisements of an all-wise and beneficent Providence, sent for some great and humane purpose, to abate our pride, probably, to convince us of our nothingness, or to waken in us a sense of our dependence upon God: they are to be borne without murmuring;” and we shall then be able to think that the dispensations of Providence have not been aggravated by human institutions preventing to the people the supply of food! [The Right Hon. Baronet sat down amid loud cheers.]

On the motion of LORD JOHN MANNERS the debate was adjourned to next day.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17.

The discussion of the question which had been last night under the consideration of the House was resumed by

LORD J. MANNERS, who said,—I well know the disadvantages under which I rise for the purpose of renewing the momentous discussion that has now during so many nights occupied the attention of the House of Commons. I am quite aware of the disadvantages under which any Member must address this House who enlists himself neither under the blue banner of the Hon. Member for Bristol, nor under the opposite banner of the Hon. Member for Stockport. I doubt not that the House agrees with me in thinking, that both those Hon. Members are most anxious to promote that which they conceive to be the true interest of the country, and that each of them strives to the best of his ability to produce concord amongst those conflicting elements upon the favourable combination of which they conceive the happiness and prosperity of the country to depend. Feeling, then, for those who take an active part in the present discussion, sentiments of unfeigned respect, I will not summon to my

aid any of the angry feelings which out of doors may have animated debates upon this subject, but rather by an application of calmer judgment confine myself within those narrow limits which an impartial and dispassionate view of the question would naturally prescribe. I cannot, in entering upon the actual discussion of the question before us, avoid observing, that many persons seem struck with the prevailing idea that we ought to consider the supply of food for the people as a matter of political economy. Now, I cannot help thinking that some very able writers upon this subject have held a very different opinion. I will not quote Adam Smith or Ricardo, but I will allude to a foreigner of a very high authority, the weight of which ought, I think, to be more generally acknowledged. The great writer of whom I speak is the Count of Milan. In a very valuable work of his, he remarks, that statesmen ought to separate the subject of food for the people from all questions of a merely commercial nature. Men, he observed, could do without wine or oil, but the first necessary of life—that which was essential to human existence—ought not to be subjected to the ordinary rules of commercial intercourse. From this subject he addressed himself to that of the English Corn Laws, expressing such an opinion on them as might be expected from the sentiments already referred to. I am sure (said the Noble Lord) I shall not be considered presumptuous in bringing to my aid the authority of a great writer too little known, and who only requires to be known in order to be highly esteemed. As to the course which the Government are about to pursue, we certainly could not have expected any other after having heard the speech of the First Lord of the Treasury, and, at this time, I am at a loss to see how they could have taken any other course, than that which they have pursued; but how different would have been the position of Ministers if the Right Hon. Baronet had opened the ports during the past winter, and if upon the meeting of Parliament he had told them, to use his own metaphor, that he would no longer steer the ship in the same course; then he might have well vindicated the full performance of his duty, but unfortunately it would seem that the Members of his Cabinet were not prepared to support him. I listened with great attention to the reasons which he gave for taking an opposite course; but I ask what confidence can be placed in a Government which, not doing in 1845 what they admit they ought to have done, and who are agreed with us as to the remedy which they ought to have applied, yet, in defending their own laches, turn round and follow the course which now gives occasion to the present discussion? It must be remembered that the Right Hon. Baronet proposes an enormous revolution, but at the same time he stated very unfairly the argument against the resumption of the Corn Laws after the opening of the ports. He asked, did we wish for a guarantee that the Corn Law should be restored after the opening of the ports? I am sure that neither I nor any Member of this House thought that the Right Hon. Baronet could give any guarantee that, after opening the ports, he could close them again without the consent of Parliament. Why even now, late as I admit it to be, far later even than if that much-derided Protection Government had been formed at Christmas, if the Right Hon. Gentleman be in earnest—if the danger

be so imminent, the necessity so pressing, and the remedy so easy,—even now the shortest and most obvious course would be, before the end of the week, with the consent of Parliament, to open the ports and suspend the Corn Laws, and to leave it to the good sense of the people of England to determine whether they should be revived (hear, hear). What a lumbering course is that which the Government are taking! How soon do you expect that these great experiments upon every great interest of the country can be passed through Parliament; with your committee to inquire into the burdens upon land (hear, hear); your committee to inquire into the probable effect of this great commercial revolution upon your colonies (hear, hear); your committee to inquire into the probable effect upon the finances of the country, with all the able, bitter, unreserved, and unswerving hostility which you have excited against your proposal, what chance have you of this measure being immediately passed through Parliament? (hear, hear.) And now as to the subject of the guarantee. I have shown you how unfairly the Right Hon. Baronet met that argument, and, taunted as Hon. Gentlemen on this side of the House were by the Right Hon. Baronet, I must tell him fairly that I do not think that any man in England would for the future ask the Right Hon. Baronet for a guarantee upon the Corn Laws or anything else (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Gentleman inaugurated with much pomp and solemnity that great corner-stone upon which the social edifice is now to be raised; but I think the very first stroke which the illustrious founder applied to it shivered it in pieces, and made it lie there a mass of shapeless and self-contradictory atoms (hear, hear); for he has told us he does not expect that the repeal of the Corn Laws will diminish the price of agricultural produce; and the Right Hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War, improving upon that text, delivered to us a most eloquent homily to show not only that the price of provisions would not fall, but that probably there would be no importation of foreign produce whatever (hear, hear). Then, I say, apart from the merits or demerits of Free Trade, no case is made out by the Government for proposing to this Parliament so sweeping and tremendous a revolution in our whole commercial system, and that I feel myself perfectly justified in voting with my Noble Friend the member for Shropshire for an appeal to the constituencies of England (hear), and if I am told, as I may be, that for my own case an appeal to the electors of Newark will be sufficient, my answer is, that I wish not for an appeal to the electors of Newark. but to the constituencies of the country (hear). Having said this, I will also say that in my opinion the proposal of the Government is not the best that could be made. I think it is open to many of the objections I have urged against it; and moreover that it cannot be called a measure of Free Trade. I doubt whether it can even be called a scheme of free imports, when on the one hand there is Protection,—call it by whatever name you please, Protection or revenue duty,—left on a great number of manufactured articles, and on the other you maintain a prohibition against growing tobacco, and that enormous burden of the malt-tax, a great part of which must be taken as a burden upon land (hear, hear). I feel quite sure that any observations I could make would not be of the

slightest avail here, or elsewhere; still I am anxious to place, as well as I can, upon record the opinions I entertain upon this subject (hear, hear). And it does seem to me, with all due deference to what has been said by those who take strong views on this question on both sides of the House, that a measure that would admit corn the produce of the colonies and Indian corn duty free, and other foreign corn at a moderate fixed duty, would place the Corn Laws on a basis satisfactory to the mercantile interests of this country, would bind by ties of mutual interest our vast colonial empire to the mother country, and afford a moderate security against, it may be, the unnecessary fears of the English farmer (hear, hear). I must, however, beg to refer the House to a remarkable document, which has been lately submitted to the public from one of the largest houses in Manchester, Messrs. Fergusson and Taylor, in which they say that the best policy is to develop domestic agriculture, and that, although high Protective duties are alike the bane of agriculture and commerce, still moderate duties ought to be maintained. Now, that is not the production of a central Protection society, or even of any old supporters of a fixed duty—but it comes with all the weight and authority of persons most deeply and altogether interested in the property of Manchester, and in English manufactures; and, I say, that opinions and language such as this, backed up as they are by the expressed opinions of a gentleman so eminent in the commercial world as the Hon. Member for Huntingdon, are not to be pooh-poohed away by an idle sneer (hear, hear). And, I must tell the Right Hon. Baronet, at any rate, that it will not do to tell the Commons of England that a fixed duty cannot be thought of, because, some time ago, he said he never would support it (hear, hear). Well, then, although I am anxious that another Parliament should have the opportunity of considering and sanctioning some such scheme as that to which I have alluded, I do most earnestly and heartily deprecate any such rash and hasty interference with the great interests which have grown up under this system of Protection. I do deprecate any rash interference with those great interests in consequence of which, or in spite of which, if you please, manufactures have made great, and almost miraculous strides,—under which, or against which, if you please, agriculture has made such vast progress, that foreigners, if not persons in our own country, are astounded at it; and, above all, do I deprecate that this House should, at the dictation of the Right Hon. Baronet, repress the affections, the sympathies, and associations of those great rural classes to whom, in times of danger and distress, the Sovereigns of England have been ever wont to look up, and not in vain, for ready obedience, unswerving bravery, and uncompromising fidelity (cheers). For these reasons, and as I do not fear, nor do I hope much from free trade, but as I am anxious to see this great question settled in a manner satisfactory to all classes of the community, I give my most hearty vote in favour of Protection, and my most determined opposition to the proposition that this House do resolve itself into committee for the purpose of considering the Corn Laws, with a view to their repeal (cheers).

CAPTAIN LAYARD said, after the argumentative speech of the

Right Hon. Baronet, he should have thought the Hon. Gentlemen who were sitting on the other side below the gangway (the Protection benches) would not hesitate upon going into committee upon this subject. He had heard the arguments adduced by the Hon. Gentlemen opposite who were supporters of Protection; but he thought that the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had completely taken the wind out of all their sails by his speech last night. He believed that all who read that speech, though they might not have had an opportunity of hearing it, would be of the same opinion. Hon. Gentlemen opposite had talked of the greatness and glory of this empire, and of the height of prosperity at which the country had arrived, as if it was attributable to the Corn Laws. He entirely denied that those laws had had the effect of rendering this country great and glorious. The Corn Laws had been the difficulty of England; she had been a great and glorious nation not on account of the Corn Laws, but in spite of them (hear, hear). He really did not understand what the Noble Lord who had just sat down (Lord J. Manners) intended to do. From a letter that Noble Lord had addressed to his constituents, he was led to believe that, although he considered the Right Hon. Baronet's proposal a just one, he intended to vote against it. The Noble Lord the Member for Liverpool (Lord Sandon) had taken a different course, for while he expressed his disapproval of the measure, he declared his intention to support it. The Noble Lord (Lord Sandon) who attacked the measure of the Government, while he promised them his vote, reminded him of a circumstance that occurred some years ago at Huntingdon. A person in that town had a vote, which he gave in favour of the successful candidate at an election. The M.P., actuated by motives of gratitude, obtained for his supporter the situation of a chorister at Canterbury, but when he entered upon the duties of his office he was found to have no voice; and some one who was gifted with the genius of poetry, though not in so high a degree as the Hon. Member for Pontefract (Mr. M. Milnes), put the story into rhyme, which ran thus:—

“ ‘ A singing man, and cannot sing!  
 “ ‘ No need to thank your patron's bounty;  
 “ ‘ Excuse me, Sir, if I can't sing,  
 “ ‘ My voice is in another county.’ ”

(laughter). So it was with the Noble Member for Liverpool. He made a speech in favour of Protection, but his voice, though not in another county, was in another direction. He (Captain Layard) thought it would have been quite as well if the two Noble Lords had paired off without making any speech on the subject. As it was they had a speech on each side and a vote on each side (laughter). He (Captain Layard) had voted with the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. C. P. Villiers) in favour of his motion for the Repeal of the Corn Laws when, not more than a hundred Members went out with him. He (Captain Layard) at that time foretold that the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) would become a Free Trader. He (Captain Layard) had some time since compared the Right Hon. Baronet to an Opera dancer, and had said he thought that Right Hon. Gentleman would continue coquetting

with Free Trade till he opened his arms and clasped the reality (a laugh). He thought the Right Hon. Baronet had got the reality now (laughter). But though the Right Hon. Gentleman (Sir R. Peel) had but recently become a Free Trader, everybody admitted that he acted from the most honest and conscientious convictions (hear, hear). Indeed, many considerations might naturally have influenced him to adopt a totally different course (hear). It was true that the Right Hon. Baronet was open to the charge brought against him by the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli), and it was an accusation to which he (Captain Layard) would be proud to plead guilty. The charge made by that Hon. Member was, that the Right Hon. Baronet had sacrificed party feelings for the good, the glory, the happiness of his country (hear, hear, and loud cheers). He believed that that measure would tend materially to benefit the country; and the Right Hon. Baronet had made as great a sacrifice as any man could do to promote that object. He must say, for his own part, that he both honoured and admired the Right Hon. Baronet for his conduct (hear, hear). He had never, during the time he had occupied a seat in that House, given any vote with so much satisfaction as that which he intended to record in favour of the Right Hon. Baronet's proposal, because he believed the effect of the measure would be to benefit our own country, while it would prove one of the strongest links in binding together the nations of the earth in unity and peace (cheers).

MR. R. PALMER said, although, after so lengthened a discussion, he could not expect that he should be able to add anything new to the arguments which had been already advanced with so much force and ability by several gentlemen on both sides of the House, he wished to express the opinions of those whom he had the honour to represent (hear, hear), and with whom he entirely concurred, on this important subject. Those individuals were waiting with the most intense anxiety to know the result of the deliberations in that House, believing as they did that upon the result of those deliberations depended either their future prosperity or their permanent distress. It was almost unnecessary for him to represent to the House the state of public feeling in the country upon this subject. They had seen that numerous meetings had been held in different parts of the country—indeed in almost every county—since the Ministerial measures had been announced; and he believed that the sentiments expressed at those meetings were, almost without exception, unanimously condemnatory of those measures. Persons in the country connected with agriculture had never contemplated the possibility of the Right Hon. Baronet—who had for so long a time advocated the principle of Protection, and who had frequently and most ably argued the question in that House—turning round almost at a moment's notice (hear, hear), and advocate a contrary course. He considered that they were justified in that opinion by the speeches which had been delivered at various times by the Right Hon. Baronet. The Right Hon. Baronet in his first speech had mentioned among other effects of the new tariff, that a great rise had taken place in cattle and meat, notwithstanding the anticipations of a fall in their value. His Hon. Friend the Member for Somerset (Mr. W. Miles)

had stated that this rise in price was attributable to several causes, and had shown that it had no connexion whatever with the reduction of the tariff. He (Mr. Palmer) thought that, under any circumstances, the Right Hon. Baronet could not take credit for the rise in price; for his tariff was introduced with the professed object of reducing the price of food, and the fact that the prices had risen showed the incorrectness of his anticipations (hear, hear). Even admitting that the benefits expected by the Right Hon. Baronet would result from his former alterations of the law, he (Mr. Palmer) thought that would be a strong argument for leaving things as they were, without any further meddling (hear, hear). The constant alteration of the law caused more difficulty and distress among the agriculturists than the effect of unfavourable seasons. The change of 1842 produced very great inconvenience among the farmers, and just when they were beginning to recover themselves and to obtain remunerating prices, they were again thrown into a state of uncertainty and anxiety by the measure now proposed. The Noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell) had some time since uttered an expression which had since been frequently repeated,—that Protection was the bane of agriculture. Now he (Mr. Palmer) would ask any one to compare the state of the farming districts with what they were ten years ago, and to say whether there was not now a much larger amount of capital employed in agricultural operations than was the case at that period, and whether the soil had not been placed in much higher cultivation? And yet this had been effected under the operation of that principle of Protection which the Noble Lord had called the bane of agriculture. He considered that one great reason for supporting the principle of Protection was, that this country might be, as far as was possible, independent of foreign supplies. He (Mr. Palmer) was not one who would cast blame or throw imputation on any gentleman who should think it necessary to change their opinions or course of conduct from conviction, and after full consideration of the subject; but when he saw a statesman like the Right Hon. Baronet as the Government, who was no novice in the conduct of public affairs, and must have made these subjects the study of his life—when he saw a gentleman of his ability and experience overthrowing all his former arguments; and abandoning his former principles (hear, hear)—when he heard that Right Honourable Gentleman admitting that the arguments held by the Honourable Gentleman opposite for so many years were right, and that he after a few years' experience, was convinced that he were wrong; and when he (Mr. Palmer) heard the complimentary language addressed to the head of that body which went by the name of the League, he must say that his confidence in the Minister was shaken (hear, hear). For his part, having no such conviction forced on his mind, entertaining an opinion both of the justice and expediency of maintaining, as well for agriculture as for other branches of native industry, the same amount of Protection as was secured to them by the existing law, and seeing no sufficient reason for the proposed change, the Right Hon. Baronet must excuse him (Mr. Palmer) if he declined to follow him in the path through which he wished to lead them (hear, hear). They had been told the other night by the Right Hon. Secretary at War, that this

was a golden opportunity for the gentlemen connected with the landed interest to seize ; and that they now had an opportunity offered of settling the question with honour. He (Mr. Palmer) could not conceive that he could maintain his own honour at the expense of political consistency (hear, hear). He held a position in that House as independent, he believed, as any Hon. Member. He had had the honour to represent his county now for many years, and he believed that he had never been asked for, and never had given, a single pledge or promise beyond that of endeavouring to discharge his duty to his constituents to the best of his ability. But he thought that with respect to this question, on which he had always declared himself, that there was an implied understanding between him and his constituents that he should endeavour, as far as possible, to maintain the law as it now existed (hear, hear). He considered such implied understanding equally binding with any pledge, and he felt himself bound to maintain it towards his constituents ; and, as long as he had the honour of sitting in that House, it should never be said that he deserted his constituents, or betrayed the interests committed to his charge (hear, hear).

SIR C. NAPIER would fain have hoped, after the able and heart-stirring and unanswerable speech of the Right Hon. Baronet last night, that Hon. Gentlemen opposite would have allowed the debate to come to a conclusion that evening. He was happy to say that the Hon. Gentleman who spoke last had not given vent to any of that bitter and invective feeling which other Hon. Gentlemen on the same side who had addressed the House had sent forth against the Right Hon. Baronet ; and he believed, if all the Gentlemen on the other side had followed his example, they would have carried more weight in that House. The great complaint against the Right Hon. Baronet was, that he had proposed a new Corn Law, in consequence of the state of the potato crop in Ireland, and the scarcity that was likely to take place there. Now, he did not see why the Right Hon. Baronet alone should be blamed by the Gentlemen opposite. The Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Home Department had changed his mind also, the Secretary at War had very properly followed in their wake (laughter), and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he believed had changed his opinions likewise (laughter). These Gentlemen had all followed the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government ; and he must say he also wondered that Gentlemen opposite did not attack the Noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) and Hon. Gentlemen on his side of the House, who had maintained their notions of a fixed duty just as strongly as the Right Hon. Baronet did the sliding scale (hear). But those Gentlemen who had held by a fixed duty, were not attacked for changing their minds. And why should not Gentlemen change if they adopted a better course ? He was a practical farmer of four years' standing (much laughter). He took a farm in his neighbourhood—not a very large one—of 40 acres (renewed laughter). Gentlemen might laugh, but what was good for 40 acres was good for 400 (cheers). He took these 40 acres, and found it was bad land—what was called in Hampshire forest land. His predecessors could grow nothing ; the land was foul, and had never been cleaned out ; like many Gentlemen opposite, they went

with the plough four inches deep, and had men with four horses drawing it. They lost money, as might have been expected, and three or four of them went away ruined. He began to farm exactly as his predecessors had done, and at the end of the year he had lost £200 (laughter). He began to think this was bad farming, especially when he found that a good fellow near him, who farmed 10 acres of the same land, had constantly fine crops. His land was dry; and though he had no capital, he seemed to live very well on the profits of his farm. He at last said to him—"Old boy! I wish you would explain to me how it is that you, who have no capital at all, you, who have only a little pony and your wife (laughter) get so good crops out of your land." His reply was that if he (Sir C. Napier) followed his advice, he would soon have as good crops as he had. He told him to take the water off, to clean out his ditches, clean his fields well, and lay his land over—that he should first of all get a plough, go with it as deep as he could, and then go over the furrows with another plough cutting deeply. He followed this advice, and produced an excellent crop next year. The land that never produced more than four or five quarters of oats produced eleven quarters (hear, hear). He continued to follow the old man's system, and now, instead of the land lying fallow and idle, as it all was in the neighbourhood, he had only three acres that were not growing crops. But the Hon. Gentleman might wish to know what was growing on the land. He had one field with turnips as large as the head of most of the Gentlemen in that House (laughter). He had had his sheep feeding upon these turnips for the last two months. After describing the mode in which he should feed his sheep after the turnips were exhausted, the Hon. and gallant Member strongly advised the agriculturists in that House to follow the advice of his poor neighbour, and put in drains into their ditches, to level their banks, which only bred vermin and all sorts of weeds, to go to Scotland and get proper implements, and let them cultivate their land properly, and he was sure there would be no more heard of the fear of importation from abroad. He (Sir Charles Napier) had taken up a line of argument a little different from other speakers; but the fact was, the debate was worn out, and it was necessary to give the House something fresh in order to enlighten the agricultural mind (laughter).

MR. SHAW said, if he were to consult only his own feelings, he would much rather have taken no part in that debate. In every view that he could regard the subject to which it related, and the circumstances under which it had been brought forward, they were painful and repulsive (hear, hear); they brought personal friendships and party predilections into direct collision with public duty, and left him only the alternative of perfect silence or a condemnation of those men who for the sixteen years that he had then been in public life he had followed and esteemed (hear, hear). The conviction, however, that not only the measure itself, but, above all, the means by which it was about to be carried would more injuriously affect Ireland than any of the united kingdom (hear, hear), as well as the peculiar course the debate had taken, constrained him to trespass for a short time upon the attention of the House (hear, hear). With few exceptions the discussion had been kept up on

that side of the House, between the former supporters of the Government and the Members of the Government, aided by the select number of independent men who, "few and far between" (hear, hear), had risen to say they would vote for the Government, while generally they had made their speeches against them (cheers). Amongst those there had been no speech indeed, with the reasoning of which he more entirely concurred, than that of his Noble Friend the Member for Liverpool (Lord Sandon). His Noble Friend described the course taken by the Government as unwise, impolitic, and unjust, and the reasons which they had adduced to sustain their sudden change of opinion as inconclusive and unsatisfactory (hear); and although his Noble Friend expressed a strong hope, in which he (Mr. Shaw) cordially joined, that if the measure did pass, it would disappoint both the hopes and the fears that were then entertained respecting it; yet his Noble Friend regarded it as a most perilous and uncalled-for experiment. He (Mr. Shaw) only regretted that his Noble Friend and he had come to different conclusions with respect to their votes. And when the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) alluded to Lord Ashley and those other Hon. Members who had resigned their seats, rather than repudiate their implied engagements to their constituents, the Right Hon. Baronet had no right to claim them as approving of the course he (Sir R. Peel) had taken; but, like his Noble Friend (Lord Sandon), they probably considered that when the great leader of the Conservative party had taken that course, and proposed a sweeping measure of Free Trade, that that was entirely a new element in the question; that it rendered the result inevitable; and that a protracted contest would be injurious to all parties. That, more or less, every man must see. But, with all the esteem which he (Mr. Shaw) sincerely felt for his Noble Friend and those Honourable men, he felt it to be the duty of every independent Member of that House to oppose what he thought wrong, and support what was in itself right, irrespective of the acts of others, and of consequences for which he could not fairly be held responsible (cheers). True it was, that they must reckon on defeat, but was that surprising? A comparatively little band suddenly separated from what had been a powerful and commanding body in that House. The Noble Lord (Lord Morpeth) taunted them that they were without leaders or a head. True, their leaders had not only abandoned them, but gone over to the enemy (hear, hear). They were necessarily in some amazement and confusion—without concert, ill-arranged, and unorganized, undisciplined, unofficered; but yet undismayed; and believing the cause in which they had enlisted to be just, they at least would not be deserters from it, and whether victory or defeat awaited them, they were resolved, with God's help, to be true and faithful to the end (loud cheers). The subject of the potato failure, on which the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had laid such peculiar stress, had been, since that speech, debated on a separate motion by the Hon. and Learned Gentleman (Mr. O'Connell). He (Mr. Shaw) on that occasion had stated his opinion, that although there would be in Ireland a considerable aggravation of the usual periodical distress at the close of the present season, still that he thought

very exaggerated statements had been put forth, and undue alarm excited on the subject (hear, hear). His desire was to be most guarded and cautious on a question involving the vital interests of the suffering poor in Ireland. But, while he would not for a moment check the sympathies of the House, nor discourage the efforts of the Government, he could not avoid deprecating exaggeration of the evil. He had taken great pains, and had considerable opportunity of making personal inquiries on the subject. He had communicated with contractors for large establishments, such as gaols and workhouses, and had watched the state of the market since the panic had ceased; he had, besides the country in which he resided, visited and made personal inquiries during the autumn and winter in the counties of Cork, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Carlow, and Wicklow, and received reports from many other parts of Ireland, and the result he came to was—that, although there had been in the digging out season a general apprehension of failure, that that had since been greatly allayed, and that there was at present in most parts of Ireland the reasonable expectation of a fair average crop (hear). In some parts he feared it would be very deficient, and the evil had been increased by a waste of the potato, and a glutting of the market under the influence of an early panic (hear). He should also observe that there was a more than ordinary supply of grain and other food in Ireland, as a substitute for the potato, and he trusted likewise better means of purchasing food, from a more than ordinary employment of labour (hear). He was, however, far from blaming the Government; on the contrary, he commended them for taking active means of averting the calamity of famine, and would gladly support every measure for employing the population and alleviating the sufferings of the destitute poor in Ireland (hear). What he deprecated was an exaggeration of the evil, and he thought a use, unjustified by the facts, had been made of it (cheers). But, assuming that the potato failure had been as general and entire as some persons had represented, could that for one moment be seriously urged as a sufficient reason for the sudden change of the Government on the subject of the Corn Laws? (hear, hear). Were they to be told that a man of the ability, the knowledge, the information, and practical mind of his Right Hon. Friend at the head of the Government (Sir R. Peel), could for thirty years of public life have recommended and advocated the system of Protection as applicable to all the varied wants and circumstances of that great country (hear, hear), without taking into calculation the liability to partial failures, deficient crops, and bad seasons, to an extent far beyond what it could for one moment be contended, the potato failure could affect the present controversy (cheers). It was only within the last few days that he had heard the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham), in answer to the Hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. S. Crawford), when proposing out-door relief under the Poor Law in Ireland as a remedy for the potato failure, ridicule the notion that a temporary emergency should be met by altering the principle of an established system (hear, hear). With reference to the diminution of the committals for crime during the last three years, quoted by the Right Hon. Baronet, he (Mr.

Shaw) or any one acquainted with criminal statistics could have told the Right Hon. Baronet that such was always the case where the demand for labour and the employment of the poor increased (hear, hear); and he (Mr. Shaw) thought the stimulus given in that respect by the railway works of the last three years had been rather unfairly kept back by the Government speakers (cheers). He (Mr. Shaw) was not there to deny that there was not only much that was plausible, but much abstract truth in the principles of Free Trade, and the maxims of political economy (hear). They were not, at that side of the House, ignorant of the writings of Adam Smith, of Malthus, M'Culloch, Ricardo, and other eminent men of that class; but they also knew a little more (hear, hear); and that while those doctrines might be very sound as regarded a new country, or if you could persuade all the nations of the earth to act with the reciprocity and simplicity of a single community, ruled by one authority; yet that when you came to apply them to such a country as ours, you could only do so with a full consideration of the artificial condition, the national debt, and consequent heavy taxation, the peculiar circumstances and complicated interests upon which essentially depended the welfare, prosperity, and happiness of this mighty empire (cheers).

"A thousand years scarce serve to form a state,  
An hour may lay it in the dust."

From whom had they so frequently and profitably learned these lessons of practical wisdom as from those very men who would now have untaught them all? (cheers). The speech of the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) on the previous night, had been from first to last a Free Trade speech, unqualified by any one of the doctrines of caution or practical experience of which he had not only been the disciple but the teacher for the last thirty years; the new convert had almost surpassed the old professors, and his (Sir R. Peel's) whole argument was *petitio principii* in regard to that which was the real gist of the question in dispute; namely, whether the theories of the Free Trade philosophy were to be applied in their full latitudinarianism, or cautiously adopted with the careful discrimination and matured wisdom which the existing circumstances of an ancient and highly artificial country suggested (hear, hear). The onus lay upon the Right Hon. Baronet to convince those whose opinions had been formed under his own teaching for the last thirty years, that he (Sir R. Peel) had been wrong all the rest of his life, and was only right since the 1st of last November (cheers), and that, either by the proof of altered facts or circumstances, not temporary emergencies—or by a new course of reasoning, not the trite truisms borrowed from the school of the consistent Free Traders, or plagiarisms from the speeches of Hon. Gentlemen opposite, or the Anti-Corn Law Leaguers all which had been a thousand times explained or refuted by the Right Hon. Baronet himself (hear, hear). His (Mr. Shaw's) vocabulary or powers of reasoning could add nothing to the able arguments and eloquent statements made at former times by the Right Hon. Baronet and the members of the present Government with all the force of sincerity and truth; and it would be nauseous to the House and the country were he (Mr. Shaw) to attempt to re-produce

them then, when night after night the process was going on of the words in which they had been spoken being eaten at that very table where and by the very men by whom they had so recently been uttered (laughter and cheers). The Right Hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department (Sir J. Graham) had tried to gulp all his at one swallow (cheers). But that was too much even for the stomach of the Right Hon. Baronet, and it quite overcame the nerves and gravity of the House (cheers). No, it would not do for the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) now to talk of "abrogating his inheritance" rather than wring his wealth from the poverty of the poor man. Was that, then, what the Right Hon. Baronet was doing for the last thirty years of his life? That assumption was really the begging of the whole question (hear, hear). Did the Right Hon. Baronet think that even the poor rustic labourer was so simple as to be taken by that statement—recollecting who it was that, as it were only the other day, so poetically described,—

"The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,"

As compared with "the sad sound of the factory bell," and draw the pathetic contrast between "the blooming garden and the foul garret,"—"the innocent walk of the country Sabbath, and the debauchery, the sorrows, and the sins of the crowded manufactory" (cheers); who spoke of "sinking hearts and rebelling hands;" and asked, where were the moralists that they did not lift their voices against those fearful consequences? (hear, hear). Ay, but where were the moralists now (hear, hear), when the Right Hon. Baronet was himself proposing to perpetrate a cruelty which he then described as "far more atrocious than sending the Poles to Siberia?" (cheers) and declaring that that very system would make this "the last country he would wish to inhabit," which he now said was to render it prosperous, peaceful, and contented? (cheers). Depend upon it, this sudden change in six months from the opinions of a whole life would much more affect the public character of the men than the soundness of their former opinions; and, unless that change could be supported by facts and reasoning very different from any that had been adduced in the present debate, their former opinions and arguments would remain untouched, and bear all the impress of their intrinsic truth (cheers). But passing from the six months' converts to those whose conversion appeared, as far as the public was informed, to have been brought about in not many more than six days (a laugh), he came to what did appear to him the most inexplicable, what certainly had been the wholly unexplained part of the entire case—he meant the conduct of those colleagues of the Right Hon. Baronet who had resigned their offices and raised alarm throughout the country because they disapproved of his proposed measures, and yet, in not a great many days resumed their offices again for the purpose of supporting those same measures (hear, hear). It was no answer to say that they were all honourable and upright men, who could not be influenced by dishonest or corrupt motives; he had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with most of them, and he could say with the most unaffected sincerity that he knew all that to be true; there was one of them whom the whole

civilized world knew to be incapable of trickery or double dealing (hear, hear); but that was not enough, as public men. The public had a right to demand a public explanation of them (cheers). It was not for this country only, but that the conduct of their Government might be intelligible to all other countries (hear, hear). It was not for the present time so much as for history (hear, hear). It had been justly observed by Lord Mansfield, if he rightly recollected, or some other eminent man, that the worst precedents had often been established from the best motives, and that when a sound principle was departed from in order to meet the exigencies of a particular case, that which was in itself well intentioned, and in the particular instance just, could easily be turned by designing men, and from bad motives, to the purposes of injustice (cheers). The Right Hon. Baronet seemed to think that the personal conduct of the Members of the Government was a matter of little moment: but he (Mr. Shaw) protested against that doctrine (cheers); and while he did not attribute to the Members of the Cabinet the slightest taint of personal corruption or dishonesty of motive, yet, if their conduct continued unexplained, he believed that the discriminating public of that and other countries would consider that it evinced an infirmity of mind, and instability of purpose, and a political tergiversation (cheers), a species of Cabinet juggle unprecedented in the annals of English statesmen (loud cheers). Would their powerful neighbour, France, fail to draw the striking contrast between the eminent man the first Minister of the Crown in that country, by his firmness and consistency strengthening the Government and consolidating their power, and ours, weakening and dissolving both by the exhibition of the very opposite qualities? (cheers). Was that a moment that America, however you might attempt to bribe her to peace by a Repeal of the Corn Laws should see the public men of England wanting in that true English spirit which refused to succumb to blustering and clamour? (cheers). He was persuaded they were all men of personal courage who would not hesitate to risk their lives in the discharge of their duty, but, if their recent conduct passed without explanation, he maintained that they would be handed down to posterity as the greatest political cowards that ever wielded the destinies of this great empire (cheers). The Right Hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) not only seemed to speak with all the zeal of a political apostate, but to be ready to act with all the desperation of a political coward (cheers). He made it the substance of his speech—the very point of his peroration. He (Mr. Shaw) did not see how it could bear any other construction than that he (Sir J. Graham) for the sake of peace and good order, discarded that great party which had always been the friends of order—which comprised an immense proportion of the rank, the property, and, let what would be said to the contrary, the intelligence of the country; and who at all events inherited the principles as well as the blood of those who for centuries had been distinguished as the supporters of good order, the laws and the constitution—and forsooth, to prevent revolution, anarchy, and ruin! The Right Hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) would throw himself and the Government bodily into the hands of the Anti-Corn Law League in England, and of the Repeal Association in Ireland (hear, hear).

He (Mr. Shaw) had been much struck the other day by the speech of a tenant-farmer, he believed in Northamptonshire, who told the anecdote of a manufacturer's remark to him—"Why, you farmers are fools; why don't you agitate and annoy the present Government, for that is the only way of obtaining anything from them" ("hear," and laughter). The lesson had not been lost in Ireland; he knew that an Hon. Friend of his, and one for whom he had much personal regard, widely as he differed from him in politics (he meant Mr. Smith O'Brien), had hailed the present concession as an harbinger of a repeal of the Union; and he (Mr. S. O'Brien) was an enthusiastic and earnest man who would not fail to profit by it, while he (Mr. Shaw) protested he should not be so much astonished, if, in two years hence, he found his Right Hon. Friend (Sir Robert Peel) under the pressure of agitation, and in deference to popular clamour in Ireland, proposing some modified plan of a repeal of the Union (hear, hear), as he would have been two years ago, had any one then predicted that he (Sir R. Peel) would, at the present time, have proposed the measure that the House was then discussing (cheers). As regarded Ireland, the measure would, in a two-fold point of view, be unfavourable to the Union. First, it would take from the friends of that measure the argument of the great advantage Ireland derived from the certain demand of the English market for her agricultural produce, almost her sole staple commodity (hear, hear). And her imports of corn to Great Britain were yearly and rapidly increasing (hear). Next, it would furnish to the repealers the strongest inducement to persevere, seeing that while Protection was abolished, and all bounties taken from other trades, a great encouragement and a monster bounty was offered to the trade of agitation (cheers). And when the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) used a threat to the agricultural interest, which he (Mr. Shaw) thought was not very worthy of him (Sir R. Peel), nor could much alarm them (hear)—that he was not very unwilling to yield the total and immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws. Surely that was but a further proof of the instability of mind of the Right Hon. Baronet, and his besetting infirmity to adopt the counsel of his opponents, and to yield that to pressure and to clamour which he refused to reason and to justice (cheers). The Noble Lord (Lord J. Russell), in concluding his speech the other night, spoke of the "glory" to be reaped by the present Government, and the solid satisfaction by the Noble Lord and his party from their coalition for the carrying of the measure then before the House. When he (Mr. Shaw) heard the Noble Lord apply the term "glory" to the present Government as their share, he could not but think that the Noble Lord was speaking bitter irony. If glory at all it must be the glory of martyrdom (cheers). For let success or failure be the result, let that measure bring weal or woe to the great interests of the country, surely glory or honour, or credit, could never attach to the means by which the present Government would have carried it; a course which would have given a shock to public feeling, which would vibrate through every portion of the empire, and shake throughout the world all public confidence in their public men (cheers). But that the Noble Lord and Gentlemen opposite—as party men—should feel great

satisfaction, was only natural. They saw on his side of the House their ranks broken—their strength scattered. His Right Honourable Friend (Sir Robert Peel) having committed the suicide of his own party with the very weapon by which he had formerly overthrown the Noble Lord and his party. The man who, at the head of an overpowering phalanx of that House, had triumphantly driven the Noble Lord from his position, now supplicating the Noble Lord to spare the existence of his (Sir R. Peel's) Government (hear). At all events existing as a Government upon the sufferance of the Noble Lord (hear). A Government obviously *in extremis* (cheers). Cabinet Ministers, without seats in Parliament, offices vacant, and which could not be conveniently filled up (hear). For whether the popularity of the Government was tested by appeals to a Conservative or Free Trade constituency, to an agricultural or metropolitan district, failure was likely to be the result (cheers). For his part, he (Mr. Shaw) said, and he said it in the sincerity of his heart, that when he recalled what the party led by the Right Hon. Baronet was three years ago, and what it had become, he was sorry his political life had lasted until he saw that day, and he was impelled by an imperative sense of duty to renounce the leadership of the man with whom he had been associated throughout his (Mr. Shaw's) political life, whom, however, he trusted, he could be permitted to call his Right Hon. Friend, mistaken, and greatly mistaken, as he (Mr. Shaw) thought his Right Hon. Friend. He (Mr. Shaw) was satisfied that he (Sir R. Peel) was influenced by a sense of what he deemed his public duty. He (Mr. Shaw) claimed for himself the same just constructions of his motives, in opposing his Right Hon. Friend, and it was very painful to him personally (hear). He would conclude by addressing to his Right Hon. Friend, on his (Mr. Shaw's) own behalf, and that of those who felt with him, the words which not very long before, and on a similar occasion, his Right Hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel) had addressed to the Noble Lord opposite, the Member for London—"While you invite us to follow you, you present to us only distracted councils, conflicting colleagues, statements of facts not to be reconciled, and arguments leading to opposite conclusions. We then peremptorily refuse to surrender our judgment, and to throw the Protection secured to agriculture under the existing law into the lottery of legislation, in the vain hope that we might by chance draw the prize of a better." (cheers.)

MR. BRIGHT said he felt, as the Right Hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Dublin resumed his seat, that the House had reason to regret that some Hon. Gentleman or other had not beforehand learned off by heart the speeches delivered in former times by the Right Hon. Baronets (Sir R. Peel and Sir J. Graham). If those speeches had been accurately committed to memory by some two Hon. Members representing counties, and they had stood up to repeat their task, much time would have been saved, and many repetitions of the same quotations avoided. When the Hon. Member for Bristol (Mr. P. Miles) moved the amendment, he (Mr. Bright) had hoped they should have the principle of Protection discussed—he hoped that, as the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had moved the very same proposition which had been so ably, consistently,

and perseveringly proposed by the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers), they should have that proposition met by another in which the question of Protection should be raised. He could assure Hon. Gentlemen on the other side of the House that they never committed a greater mistake than in supposing that the people of this kingdom cared one straw for the quarrel which had arisen in the great Conservative party. He had followed the course of the debate; he had endeavoured to understand the reasons—and they were very few—assigned by Hon. Gentlemen opposite for resisting the Ministerial proposition. The Right Hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Dublin would forgive him for not undertaking to answer the speech which the House had just heard (cheers from the Protection benches). This was a discussion upon Protection; the Right Hon. Gentleman said not one syllable upon that point (cheers from the Opposition benches). He (Mr. Bright) should pass, therefore, to the speeches of those Hon. Gentlemen who had tried to grapple with the question. The Hon. Member for Bristol said the farmers would not be long content to sell cheap corn and buy dear sugar. The Hon. Member for Lincolnshire, at a meeting of the Central Protection Society, held in Willis's rooms some time ago, declared that the colonies had been protected at a very heavy expense to the British agriculturist. The inference from such statements was, that, in the opinion of Hon. Gentlemen opposite, it was not fair to give Protection to the colonial sugar grower, if Protection were withdrawn from the British corn grower.—Granted; but it must be equally clear, that if there were any trade or branch of industry to which the Government did not afford Protection, the Protection now afforded to agriculture was unjust to the classes which were without Protection. He (Mr. Bright) was, in some sense, the representative in that House of one of the largest trades carried on in the country—a trade to which no agricultural member ever proposed to grant Protection by legislative enactment. The Hon. Member for Somerset (Mr. W. Miles) said that trade had ten per cent. of Protection on some portion of their manufactures. Since he (Mr. Bright) had entered that House a motion had been made to remove the prohibition on the exportation of the machinery which was used in that trade; every one in that House who was interested in the manufacture voted for the removal of that prohibition. Last year the Right Hon. Baronet took off the duty on the importation of cotton yarn; every one in that House connected with the trade voted for the reduction. But he spoke not of cotton or woollen manufactures; he came to that great branch of national industry of which Hon. Gentlemen had spoken so very much—he presumed, because they knew so very little. He had passed the rooms of the Central Protection Society in Bond Street the other day; the place looked very seedy and forlorn (laughter); there was a large plate on the door—"Central Society for the Protection of Agriculture and Native Industry." What was this native industry for which those gentlemen were now so zealous? In 1842, the Hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) brought forward a motion for a committee with the view of showing that if a law were made to raise the price of bread it was becoming that the House should

ascertain whether it was possible to make a law to raise the rate of wages. What was the answer of Hon. Gentlemen? That labourers and weavers did not understand political economy. They argued that long ago it had been settled that wages could not be raised by act of Parliament. After dividing against the motion Hon. Gentlemen took their seats within an hour, and began to make a law to raise what they had themselves to sell, namely, the produce of their own estates (cheers). The speech of the Hon. Member for Northampton was fluent and skilful, but skilful only in evasion. The population had increased 1,500,000 since the Corn Law was passed. Many of the followers of Hon. Gentlemen opposite sighed for a law which should prohibit the importation of corn (no, no). Well, they would prohibit it up to the point at which it would be safe. With the increasing population there was an increasing competition for food, and therefore they hoped for increased prices. The public would suppose that they had only an anxiety to increase the rent of the land-owners. Was it protection to the farmer? It was said the farmer would not fight for it, were it not so. But where was protection to the labourer? He (Mr. Bright) had heard a minister of the Church of England say the labourers' protection was the Poor Law; so was it the landlords.' The senior Member for Wiltshire, in reviewing the condition of the agriculturists, said that it had been his lot to be born a landowner, that a man was not responsible for the sphere in which he was placed, but that if he had to come into the world again, he knew no condition which he should choose with so much alacrity and contentment as the condition of an agricultural labourer (great laughter). He (Mr. Bright) felt a delicacy in saying anything to imply a doubt of the Hon. Gentleman's choice; but he would rather take the opinion of an agricultural labourer than of the Hon. Gentleman, landowner as he was. They had heard of a meeting held at Goatacre ("oh, oh"); it had been said it was got up by the League. He knew that Gentlemen opposite were so convinced of the omnipresence of the League, that if he said the League had nothing to do with it, he was not sure that Hon. Gentlemen would believe him. But there had been a second meeting at Bremhill, in Wiltshire, where a certain labourer named Job Gingell said, "I be protected, but I be starved." This was not the case in Wiltshire alone; an Hon. Friend had just placed in his hand a paper drawn up by a respectable person in the town of Tiverton, which contained the names of twenty-eight agricultural labourers and the number of their families, who were all living on 7s. per week. What was the Protection to the agricultural labourer in Wiltshire? Had he received any of that Protection which Parliament by the laws it had been enacting for these thirty years past had been endeavouring to give to the owners of the soil? The Hon. Member for Northamptonshire had touched pathetically upon the injury that would be done to the coachmakers, and the Right Hon. Baronet had not made any reply to the statement. But if the Hon. Gentleman would go to Southampton, and ask Mr. Andrews, the coachmaker, what he thought of Protection, he would be told that, at that moment, Mr. Andrews was making carriages to go to almost every country of

Europe. Why, he (Mr. Bright) not insult his countrymen so much as gentlemen opposite that in the habit of doing every foreigner who came to this country, as struck with the skill with which Englishmen manufactured every article; that Hon. Gentlemen stated broadly, and sent the statement for the review over the world, that their countrymen, known as they were, had their industry, skill, and intelligence, could not compete with the co of taste in France, or with the serf who cultivated the soil in Poland (hear, hear). Hon. Gentlemen opposite expressed their horror of the evils that would follow from the abolition of the Corn Laws; they had heard of inundations of water, but they had now discovered there might be such things as an inundation of corn! A distinguished public writer had recently said that "rivers of corn are as rare as rivers of gold;" no country produced a very great quantity of grain above what it required for its own inhabitants. Many of the Hon. Gentlemen opposite must have travelled abroad, and must have seen that there was nothing in the air, climate, or soil of foreign countries that could injure them by competition. What could be more certain than that they grew upon an acre of land in England a larger quantity of corn than in any other country in the world. Mr. Webster had pointed out England to his countrymen as far exceeding the Americans in this respect, and exhorted them to try and produce an equal quantity. If they grew more corn per acre there was another thing just as certain,—that the labourer upon their land got a smaller portion of its produce as his share than he could get in any other part of the world ("oh, oh," and "no"). Why, if prices were so much higher here, as they said they were—if the labourer's wages were 7s. a week, and if they produced twice as much from an acre as they did anywhere else, how was it possible to come to any conclusion but this, that the labourer who reaped their fields got a smaller portion of the produce for his share (loud cries of "No" from Colonel Sibthorp) than in any other country? Let them look at their advantages; they notoriously had access to larger supplies of manure than could be found in any other country; they had far better agricultural implements, at a much cheaper rate; they had better roads than could be found anywhere else; they had markets so much superior that hardly any comparison could be made with them;—why, it was Protection that had damaged them! (cries of "oh, oh!") It was not foreign competition they need fear, but they had protected the farmer into a state of decrepitude ("oh! oh!" and ironical cheers); and now a stimulus was applied to them they trembled at the consequences that might ensue. Take the county of Chester; there was a high aristocracy and a very poor tenantry; the land was of average quality, but most wretchedly cultivated, and there would be a mass of pauperism there equal to that in the south western counties, if it were not for its proximity to Lancashire, where the labourers found refuge and employment. It was not the soil of Cheshire; there was nothing in the climate that made the farmers poor: it was the legislation of that House which had destroyed the vitality of agriculture, and under which, he ventured to say, no other trade could have prospered. You have stated in this House and out of doors, over and over

again, that if the Corn Laws were abolished the land would be uncultivated ; that there would be no rent. You have told your tenants, and they will bring it against you before twelve months are over, that if the Corn Laws were abolished there would be no rent at all. You said you would have a ruined tenantry, and you said you would have starving labourers, that the national debt would not be paid ; that you would be dependent for food and for all else upon foreign nations ; that the proud aristocracy would be humbled ; that the church, and consequently that Christianity, would be in danger ; that the Crown itself would be insecure ; that the sun of England—I don't know exactly what is meant by that—would set for ever. Now, that is a very short list of the calamities which are predicted to come on the country if the proposition which has been submitted be carried. Do you now, in the face of the House and of the country, adhere to those statements, or are you anxious to repudiate them ? Why, there is no alarm evinced, although these terrible misfortunes are coming on the country ; there is no resistance. You say that seven-ninths of the population are connected with agriculture, and that nearly all the agriculturists are in favour of Protection ; and yet, although these are the prophecies made by you, who are the leaders and guides of the seven-ninths, there is not the smallest prospect of an insurrection among those who are about to be ruined (cheers and laughter). The Right Hon. Baronet, the Secretary for the Home Department has stated that for months past—I think for twelve months—there has never been even such a sound as that of sedition within the precincts of the Home-office. And now, if there is a fear of these things coming, if you do believe that calamities like these are impending, and if the farmer and labourer believe you, do you think that, just now, there would be throughout the great mass of the population such an unanimous assent to, and such an eagerness to accept, the proposition which the Right Hon. Baronet had submitted ? (“hear, hear,” and cries of “oh, oh !”) Why, where are your public meetings ? (hear, hear). The other day there was a meeting held in Dorsetshire, which was trumpeted forth as a county meeting ; yet there were only 1,500 persons present in the field in which it was held. Why, I have myself addressed 4,000 people in the same field, and after I had addressed them I presented a petition, which was passed unanimously at that meeting, to the House, praying for the total abolition of the Corn Laws (hear). But where else have you held these meetings ? Did you see that large petition which I presented from Lancashire, signed by 300,000 persons ; did you see the petition which I presented from Manchester, signed by 400,000 persons ? And then Hon. Members and Noble Lords opposite come down, with difficulty grasping an immense mass, perhaps 150 petitions, and each document having, it may be, twelve or eighteen signatures ! (“oh, oh !”) I know myself of an instance in which a Noble Lord presented 100 petitions, and he stated that the number of signatures, on the average, to each, was only, in fact, thirty for the whole lot ! (laughter). Again, I will ask, where is the public opinion in your favour ? Look at the public press ; go through the whole country, and see what newspapers circulate most extensively, and you will

find that these, almost without an exception, are in favour of the proposition of the Government. We have heard of men going merrily to battle; there is then the hope of escape, and the chance of that fame which successful battle gives. I have even heard of men so daring and reckless as to go whistling to execution; but I declare never in my existence did I see or hear of a number of men going to such unutterable ruin sliding down inevitably to such an abyss as that to which they have directed the attention of their tenantry, with faces so jovial, so smiling, and contented, as those of the Hon. Protectionists (great laughter). You say that the Right Hon. Baronet is a traitor. It would ill become me, at any time, to volunteer a defence of that Right Hon. Baronet; still less would it become me to do so after the speech which he delivered last night (cheers)—a speech, I venture to say, more powerful, and more to be admired than any speech ever heard in this House within the memory of any man in it (loud cheers). I watched the Right Hon. Baronet go home last night, and, for the first time, I confess, I envied him the ennobling feelings which must have filled his breast after delivering that speech (cheers). That speech has been carried by scores of thousands of newspapers to every part of the kingdom, and to every corner of the world; and wherever there is a man who cares for justice, and wherever there is a suffering labourer whom you have trampled upon, it will give joy to the heart of the one, and hope to the breast of the other (loud cheering). You chose the Right Hon. Baronet, and why did you choose him? You chose him because he was the ablest man of his party (hear, hear). You always said so until now, and I believe you do not deny it now (hear, hear). Why was he deemed the ablest? Because he had great experience; because you knew he was a man of profound attainments; and because you believed he had an honest anxiety for the good of his country. You placed him in office, and when men are in office they are not the same as when they are out of office (hear). The present generation does not deal as mildly, nor will posterity, with men in office as they do and will with men in opposition. There are the responsibilities attached to office according to which a man and his measures will be judged; and look at the populations and their manifestations, of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and ask yourselves whether you dare take office—remembering them—to maintain the Corn Law (hear, hear). There is not a man among you with all his valour, although you do plant the standard of Protection, cry down the Anti-Corn Law League, and cry up “Protection for ever,” there is not a man in your ranks—I defy you to it—who dare sit on those benches as Prime Minister of England, pledged to the maintenance of those laws (loud cheering). The Right Hon. Baronet took the only honourable course—I admit it was the most honourable course—he resigned (hear, hear). He told you, by that very act, plainly, “I can no longer do your work; I can’t defend your case. The experience I have had, since I came into office, is such, that it is now impossible for me to retain office to maintain your Corn Laws.” When the Right Hon. Baronet resigned he was no longer your Minister (hear, hear), he came back to office as the Minister of the Sovereign, as the Minister of the people, and not

again as the Minister of a class who made him such for their own special and private objects (cheers). The Right Hon. Baronet has not used you badly—he offered no obstruction to your taking office (“hear, hear,” and laughter). The Right Hon. Baronet remained quiescent. He has stated distinctly that he did not advise the Queen to send for the Noble Lord the Member for the city of London ; he left the Sovereign at liberty to use her own discretion as to the party for whom she would send ; and I have no doubt, though it may be presumptuous to say so, that the fact had been revolved and reflected upon in the mind of the Sovereign, that, if she were to ask you to take office to maintain that Corn Law, she would be jeopardizing the aristocracy you care so much for, and doing damage to the institutions you affect to reverence in a thousand times more extended degree than could possibly be done by an instantaneous destruction and sweeping away of the entire system of Protection (cheers). Only look what sort of a Government it would be (hear, hear). We have had a sort of programme of it in *The Times* newspaper this morning (laughter). There it is set down that the Hon. Member for Somersetshire is to preside at the Board of Trade. I don’t say that all the mills in Lancashire would be shut up in a week if that event came to pass ; but I am quite certain that if it were not obviated by the most irrepressible laughter, the greatest consternation would prevail in every trading district of the country (“Oh, oh”). The Noble Lord who had lately represented a portion of the county of Lancashire—Lord Stanley—must have been a leading man in this Government (hear), and just recollect the remarkable knowledge of geography which that Noble Lord on one occasion displayed in this House, with respect to a Russian province (laughter). Look again at the Hon. Member for Norfolk (Mr. Wodehouse), who would also be called upon to take a principal character, and remember how, when deputed as I suppose by the Central Protection Society, to have what is called, in the eloquent vernacular of the Association, “a shindy,” he had exhibited in St. Andrew’s Hall, at Norwich. Recollect also what had been said by another Hon. Member that the principle of Protection had been supported by a former President of the United States ; and when we find one man showing so much ignorance of geography, and another man so much more of history, we cannot expect that they will make a very brilliant Cabinet. No doubt the Duke of Richmond would have been a leading man in that Cabinet. I heard the Duke of Richmond speak in another place lately. He there and then said that Mr. Cobden got £30,000 a week by his business ; and another assertion he made, equally remarkable, was, that one of his tenants paid a larger amount of poor’s rates than did all the Anti-Corn Law League put together. That may be quite true ; I doubt it ; but if it is true it speaks very badly for the Duke of Richmond’s protection, if in one of his own parishes, one of his own tenants is obliged to pay more poor-rates than so numerous a body as the Anti-Corn Law League, spread over the whole kingdom (“hear, hear,” and laughter). Why, I am quite sure that in all the public speaking in which I have ever been engaged, I have never heard any thing so disastrous to the Aristocracy of this country, and especially so disastrous to the order of Dukes, as has been uttered

by that Noble Duke within the last three or four months (hear). Such exaggerated statements, such charges against men who differ from him in opinion—such sentiments as those he made use of last night in another place—such a hint as whether it would not be advisable to send itinerant persons down to the North, to show that cotton-mills can be burned as well as wheat stacks (hear, hear), I have never listened to. Are these the men whom you really profess to be anxious to place on those benches, instead of the statesmen who now sit there? You know that the country would not permit it for a week; and, in fact, it is not to do so, that you carry on this opposition to the Government, but it is for the purpose of being revenged on him who slighted the obligations of party to do a great good to the country, waiting on and looking to him for its commercial deliverance (hear). The Hon. Member for Oxford (Sir R. Inglis) makes a lamentation, in which I certainly cannot participate, because of the breaking up, by that desertion, of a great party, I have always found and always understood that the country gained when a party lost, and there has not been a thing more advantageous for this kingdom than the schism which has taken place on those benches (hear). The Hon. Bart. (Sir R. Inglis) intends to give his vote against the Government, but I understand that the whole bench of Bishops are to give their support (laughter). Is there an Hon. Member opposite, who dares to say that a Bishop of the English Church, or of any other church, would vote for the Corn Laws when we know that there exists the intensest suffering in our own country? When famine is fast approaching in Ireland, is there a dignitary of a Christian Church who dare, in the face of the world, give his vote in opposition to the carrying of a law which will throw open the ports, and give whatever supply of food can be had to the miserable and misfortune-visited population of this empire? (hear, hear.) But the Hon. Member may be certain that there will always be a Tory party; and so long as there is injustice to be done that Hon. Baronet will be enabled to support it; so long as there is an imposition, civil or ecclesiastical, to be carried, the constituency whom he represents will be ready to throw its shield over him—a constituency which, from the time they passed the famous Oxford Decree, in 1683, has been diligently affording proof after proof that there may exist the most illimitable acquaintance with books accompanied with the profoundest ignorance of men (cheers). The question now is, not whether this measure is to be passed, but whether it is to be a gradual or immediate abolition of the Corn Laws. I say it is a great, a noble measure, and none of the Shibboleths used against the Anti-Corn Law League shall ever make me deny that it is a great measure, and that it is honourable to the Government who have proposed it. Great measures, like great pictures, are often tarnished by single defects, and a serious defect in this Bill is, that it does not immediately abolish the Corn Laws (hear, hear). The delay is intended as a satisfaction to the farmers; but I well know that in many districts the tenant-farmers are unanimously, or apparently unanimous, in favour of an immediate rather than a gradual repeal. A friend of mine possessing large landed property tells us that he has consulted no less than 63 of his tenants, and every one of them consented to make fresh

arrangements and new leases, and consented to do so without a murmur at the prospect of an abolition of the Corn Laws (hear, hear). I happened to be acquainted with a Noble Lord who has lately been letting some farms, and I collect from his statements that he continues to receive as high rents as ever. There is no man now in England who takes the trouble to acquire correct information as to the state of the country but will readily admit that the farmers feel no alarm about the repeal of the Corn Laws. Thanks to our exertions for that, and thanks also to the inquiries which the farmers themselves have made upon the subject (hear, hear). I tell you, then, that if you despise the laws of Heaven—if you outrage the rights of man by continuing these laws for any longer period, you incur a responsibility of the weightiest character. If the Government go so far as to say that the Corn Laws ought to be repealed at the end of three years, then they condemn themselves by permitting those laws to continue one hour longer. The Government cannot be defended for proposing, the House cannot be excused for supporting, a proposition that the duty upon the importation of human food should, during the next three years, vary from 10s. to 4s. I know it is said that the emergency is not great; but if you had before you the returns—the statistical statements—which my Hon. Friend the Member for Manchester over and over again demanded, it would be easy to show what the extent of the emergency is. There are some people who will tell you that there is no inundation so long as the waters occasion no greater evil than drowning people who live in cellars. The Corn Laws do not directly affect the upper classes, but the people who live in cellars and garrets feel them bitterly. I tell you that thousands and tens of thousands are pining, and fainting, and dying; and it is no answer to me to say that the misery has not reached the dwellers in Belgrave-square. The humblest class of society has been overwhelmed by the inundation, but you must not say that there is no inundation because it has not reached the inhabitants of lofty dwellings. I repeat that thousands are dying, and if these results have not been effected by the law, they have been greatly aggravated by the law. Does any man doubt then that the country more than ever demands the Repeal, and the immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws? I believe that the association to which reference has so often been made does possess some influence with the country. I believe that this has been pretty clearly shown; that association will have another discussion upon this question, and another still, notwithstanding the attacks that have been made upon us for assisting the friends of Free Trade to purchase freeholds in counties (an Hon. Member on the Ministerial side said “hear, hear”.) I ask the Hon. Gentleman who has uttered that cheer whether or not he has perused the decision of the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, in which that Learned person said that that mode of acquiring votes was not only legal but laudable. So far from being matter of reproach or of regret, it ought to be matter of rejoicing that thousands and tens of thousands amongst the artisans and mechanics of England were acquiring for themselves the privileges which appertain to county electors; but not one farthing of the League Fund was ever appropriated

to such a purpose. The League never purchased one qualification. It has been assumed that this is a powerful weapon. It is a powerful weapon, capable, when extensively used, of almost overthrowing anything. But the League have no intention to overthrow anything. We want nothing but Free Trade. That we will have, and the moment we obtain it, that moment the League will be dissolved, but not until then. You complain that mechanics and artisans have purchased freeholds in counties. Are they not men as sound at heart, and as independent, and at least as enlightened, as any of your tenant farmers or £50 tenant-at-will voters, or pocket-borough electors? (hear, hear). If there be truth in the Ministers—if there be truth in the Member for Cork—an awful calamity is impending. For that some one must be responsible. The Government will not assume the responsibility. Do you ask the House to take it upon themselves, or will you desire to wreak your vengeance upon the Minister justify the course which you are pursuing, and relieve you from that burden which must rest somewhere? (hear, hear). If it be true that in Wiltshire there are no potatoes, or next to none, what consolation will it be to you that you have turned out the Minister, or how will anything that you have urged justify even the delay that the Minister proposes? (loud cheers).

MR. HUDSON said, that he did not belong to the class which the Hon. Member opposite described as representing pocket-boroughs. He represented a constituency as independent as that which returned the Hon. Member (hear). He deeply felt the condition of the country, and he read with the deepest attention the speeches of the Right Hon. Bart. at the head of the Government; but he rose from their perusal with a perfect conviction of the soundness of the opinions which he expressed to his constituency at the period of his election. He conceived that in dealing with the Corn Laws they had nothing to do with the calamity which threatened the country. He viewed it with regret and anxiety; he was anxious to aid in alleviating it, but it was to be met by public subscription or by Parliamentary grants, not by repealing the Corn Laws (hear, hear). If the Right Hon. Baronet came down and proposed such a course, that House would support him. Having fairly disposed of that subject, he came to the question as to the policy of a Repeal of the Corn Laws. He acknowledged that this question admitted of the greatest possible discussion; but it ought not to be encumbered with the matters with which the Right Hon. Baronet had embarrassed the question. The Right Hon. Baronet in his first appeal to the House grounded the change in his opinion upon the success of the tariff and measures of 1842. He had since abandoned that, and gone to the year 1825; he found the other ground untenable. Other causes had contributed to the prosperity of the country than the measure of the tariff. Let them examine the position of the country when the Right Hon. Baronet came to the head of the Government. He (Mr. Hudson) recollected the first interview he had had with her Majesty's Government respecting a certain railway between England and Scotland. There were difficulties in raising money; the foreign exchanges were against us owing to the importation of corn, owing to the balance of trade being against this country. It was impossible to raise

funds for the railway, and he (Mr. Hudson) was obliged to go begging from company to company, to guarantee subscribers at 6 per cent. In 1842, a new change came over us ; we had an abundant harvest, and the Right Hon. Baronet, on the first night of the debate, quite forgot that circumstance, and to what we were indebted for the prosperity of railways. If this prosperity had been produced only by the large importation of corn, he might concur with the Right Hon. Baronet ; but the effect upon our monetary system was not produced by the cheapness of corn by importation, but by the over-production of corn in our own country. The Right Hon. Baronet said—" Look at the silk business, how that has increased ! " He (Mr. Hudson) admitted that it had increased, but it had increased under Protection ; there was a large duty upon foreign silks. As to our contending with the labour of the world, how could English shoemakers, paying high taxes, compete with the shoemakers of France ? But the real question to be considered was, what would be the probable price of corn in this country under the new law. He had had large dealings in corn, and he had not thought it right to furnish the House with opinions without facts. This was a very grave part of the question, which the house would do well to consider before it came to a decision. In 1837 he had been able to deliver foreign wheat in this country, free of all charges, at 25s. a quarter of 61½lb., and he thought before they legislated upon a measure which affected such great interests, they ought to be furnished with information as to the probable price of corn (hear, hear.) If he was asked what would be the probable effect of a Free Trade in Corn, he would say, that the probable average price of corn under the new bill would be from 35s. to 40s. a quarter. He would ask the Right Hon. Member for Wilts, who said that Protection was no benefit to the farmer, whether 35s. or 40s. a quarter was a remunerating price to a farmer burdened with debt (hear). It was a mockery, an attempt to deceive (hear). He (Mr. Hudson) had heard with regret of the distress in certain agricultural districts. If the Right Hon. Gentleman came into Yorkshire, he would see no distress there, or anything like it. He would not answer for there being no distress under the new bill (hear). As to rent, there would be none ; the farmer would be unable to cultivate, and the Right Hon. Baronet would make the farmer pay the income-tax whether he made anything or nothing. The League had ventured an opinion as to the result of the operation of this bill in 1849. They stated that, in their opinion, it was probable it might work exceedingly well ; but that it was possible, on the 1st of February, 1849, there might be a period of unexampled distress to the whole class of farmers. He (Mr. Hudson) was not disposed in a moment to recal the opinions of years ; he was not prepared to throw over those principles under which the country had risen to a state of unexampled prosperity. The consequence of this measure would be, that a large portion of land would be thrown out of cultivation and applied to other purposes ; and, although we might for a time revel in low prices, the manufacturer would not derive the benefit he expected, for he would lose his best customer, the home consumer, and, then, if a bad harvest came, prices would become high, and the

Right Hon. Baronet, if he were still at the head of the Government would have to come down to the House and propose measures for providing the people with food. In his opinion, it was a measure ruinous to the best interests of the country, and ought not to be forced on without an appeal to the constituencies, for the present Parliament was returned to maintain Protection. He trusted that the Right Hon. Baronet would appeal to the country, and let the country decide whether the present measure should pass or not (hear, hear). The events which had recently taken place had most materially damaged the character of public men; but he was glad that some individuals had preferred to retire from the Administration rather than forfeit their honour (hear). When he aspired to a seat in that House he had an ambition to support the Right Hon. Baronet, but he would not stand there to support a measure which he believed was the offspring of a divided Cabinet, and of excitement of mind; for he conceived that it had not been subjected to the mature consideration which it required. He would give the measure his strongest opposition, believing that it would prove injurious to all classes of the community; and, if the House were disposed to adopt it, he for one would then not consent to give up the three years continued Protection to agriculture which it contemplated (hear, hear).

On the motion of LORD DUNCAN, the debate was then adjourned till next day.

#### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19.

The order of the day for resuming the adjourned debate being read,

LORD DUNCAN said he had always been a firm supporter of Free Trade doctrines in that House, and if he had hitherto abstained from taking any active part in this debate, it was not from the fear of any arguments he had heard from the Protectionist benches; he had abstained from a feeling that the arguments for Free Trade had been triumphant out of doors, triumphant in the Cabinet, and would shortly be triumphant within the walls of that House. He had heard a good deal of personal attack, and listened to some new fangled doctrines, touching political honour and political consistency, but neither the one nor the other, so far as he was aware, was to be found in any dictionary of political economy, and not being so found, had nothing whatever to do with the present question. He believed that the motives actuating the Right Hon. Baronet in bringing forward the measure under discussion were of the purest kind, and he (Lord Duncan) declared before God that, if he thought the contrary were the fact, no consideration on earth should induce him to give his support. The struggle against the abolition of the protective duties, knowing the consequences which had attended the policy, was unworthy of that proud aristocracy of which he was a member. He was firmly convinced that the sentiments prevailing among the agriculturists in his own district in Forfarshire, and which were favourable to the proposition of the Government, were identical with those actuating the conduct of the majority of tenant-farmers throughout the three kingdoms. They were buckling on their armour and preparing to compete with and conquer the foreigner in the

superiority of the products of industry, enterprise, and skill. In England there were peculiar burdens on land, and the English farmer was in a much less advantageous position than was the Scotch farmer, and if the Right Hon. Baronet would but remove those drawbacks he might trust confidently for the rest to British energy. He did not stand there to revoke any old opinions, he came there to pursue the course he had always considered the best one, to support every measure which would prove beneficial to the community at large, and especially beneficial to the working classes. Of such a character was, he believed, the present measure, and as such he gave it his warm approbation.

MR. ALDERMAN THOMPSON begged to state the grounds on which he gave his vote. In doing so he claimed indulgence from the circumstance of having, for twenty-six successive years, sat in the House, and witnessed the many changes which had taken place from time to time with reference to the fiscal laws, and among those, the alterations proposed by the Right Hon. Baronet. Although, in regard to the latter, there had been several arguments offered in recommendation, with which he had not entirely agreed, he had nevertheless not withheld his consent. This measure, however, he considered to be one calculated to produce great injury and depression to all the great interests of the country (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet had fairly said he could not hold out any hope that foreign nations would follow the liberal example set by us. That was the principal reason which induced him (Mr. Thompson) to pause. There was a time when master manufacturers were making large profits, and the labourers were badly off. Now, applications were made, as the Right Hon. Baronet had said, to the Horse Guards by soldiers for leave of absence to visit their friends in the country. Why, could anything speak more as to the happiness and content of the people? As further evidence, he would refer to a paper published by Mr. Tidd Pratt, within the last few days, containing an account of the savings-banks, which would show the state of the country. It appeared, that on the 20th November, 1841, in the United Kingdom, there were 841,204 depositors, representing a capital of £24,471,085; that on the 20th November, 1844, the number of depositors had increased to 1,012,045, and the capital they represented to £31,279,000. He had made some inquiries into the state of the savings-banks in Lancashire and Yorkshire, and he found that, in Lancashire, in 1841, the number of depositors was 49,948, representing a capital of £1,065,225; and, in 1844, the depositors had increased to 67,059 and their capital to £2,009,766. In Yorkshire, in 1841, the depositors were 59,434, representing a capital of £1,955,731; in 1844, the depositors had increased to 121,114, and their capital to £2,200,843. The average amount of each depositor upon the whole was £27 18s.; the average of each in Yorkshire and Lancashire, was £30. It could not be denied that the labouring classes connected with manufactures had had many comforts and enjoyments of life in a greater degree, during the last few years, than before they had been able to accumulate. Then where was the necessity why this great change should be made. The Right Hon. Baronet said, it was to improve the condition of the country.

But the effect of it would be to injure the great agricultural interests of this country, and as to the interests of the labouring classes it would not benefit them, but quite the contrary. It was all very well to talk of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, but this was impossible, when we were obliged to raise so large a revenue. The Right Hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War had said that Protection was a bad system, and that all classes would be benefited by its removal. If this were true, why did not he, in conjunction with his colleagues, produce a more pure and perfect piece of Free Trade? (hear, hear). Did he mean to say that the Cornish miners would be better off by having no Protection against the rich and shallow mines of La Plata? (hear, hear). If we are to have a Free Trade in Corn, he should like to know whether the agriculturists, the farmers, had not a right to bring their Corn to market by ship at the lowest rate (hear, hear); whether they had not a right to demand the abolition of the monopoly of the ship-owners and of the Colonial trade (hear, hear). If such a proposition were made it would be met by "Oh, we must consider the national safety and honour, and what would become of the coasting trade and the Colonial trade?" In common justice, is not the national safety and honour concerned in giving Protection to the agricultural interest? (hear). Was the House prepared to do this—to allow our merchants to deal with foreign cottons and woollens, and articles of that kind, and not allow them to embark £100 in a foreign ship and exercise the rights of ownership? He therefore could not bring his mind to go along in this extreme measure with the Right Hon. Baronet. Now, if he were to speak his own individual opinion, he should say that he was not disposed to retrace his footsteps; that he was not disposed to stand still; that, on the contrary, he was ready to go forward; but he would not go along the road which the Right Hon. Baronet had struck out, and he was prepared shortly to state his reasons for declining to follow him. The Right Hon. Baronet told them that in the year 1815 the rental of this country amounted to £32,000,000, and that in 1842 it amounted to £37,000,000, from which he would have the House believe that rents had risen within that period to the extent of £5,000,000, or about 15 per cent. But it must not be forgotten that within that period a great quantity of waste land had been enclosed (hear, hear). That surely did not show that the rents of England had increased 15 per cent. in amount.

SIR R. PEELE observed, that they had increased notwithstanding a falling price in wheat.

MR. ALDERMAN THOMPSON resumed—There had been a falling price of wheat, and there had apparently been an increase in the rental of the country; but he begged to remind the House that in addition to the enclosure of waste lands, there had been since 1815 a very large amount of capital applied to the improvement of land. If 20 or 30 millions had been applied to such a purpose during the last 30 years, as he believed was the fact, then he desired to know ought not a great allowance to be made for the per centage which such an investment might be expected to return (hear, hear). For these reasons it did not appear to him that the Right Hon. Baronet had made out his case. It was sought to persuade the House that

rents had increased during the last thirty years to the extent of £5,000,000. Additional property to that amount might have been created, but no one had shown or could show that the augmentation of income had arisen from an increase of rent. As to the financial operations of the Right Hon. Baronet, they were most successful, and if he had proceeded in the same department to relieve the working-classes from the pressure of taxation, he could not fail to have earned their lasting gratitude. For example, he might have reduced the duties on both tea and sugar—the one to 6*d.* and the other to 1*d.* in the lb. Such an alteration would have proved a great boon. Tea paid from 100 to 150 per cent. That which cost only 9*d.* paid 2*s.* 2*d.* duty. There were £9,000,000 paid annually for tea, and £4,000,000 of that were paid for duty, £2,500,000 went for freight, insurance, profits, &c., and £2,500,000 were paid to the Chinese. England consumed 60,000,000 lb. of tea, America 20,000,000 lb.; but there was no duty payable in America, and the Chinese would naturally say that the Americans were better customers than the English—at least the English Government, who laid so heavy a duty on Chinese produce, was not so true a friend as the American Government. The Chinese, therefore, might naturally turn round upon us and say, “How can you expect that we should let in British goods at a duty of 5 per cent., when you English will not receive our tea at less duty than 100 per cent.?” (hear.) He hoped that in the course of the few observations which it had become his duty to make he had said nothing to give offence (“hear, hear,” from Sir R. Peel). No man could more deeply regret than he did the necessity of differing from the Right Hon. Baronet. During the long period that he had been in Parliament—now upwards of 20 years—he had given the Right Hon. Baronet a humble but disinterested support. He had said so on the hustings in 1841, because he admired his talents as a statesman, and his integrity as a Minister (hear, hear).

SIR W. MOLESWORTH said, that just before the dissolution of the last Parliament he had given notice of a motion for a Committee to inquire if any connexion could be traced between the amount of the wages of labour and the price of food. If he had succeeded in bringing that motion before the House, he could have shown from a series of Parliamentary returns, embracing a period of more than thirty years, that there was no apparent connexion between high prices and high wages, and low prices and low wages. On the contrary, it appeared to him, from a careful examination of those returns, that, generally speaking, the wages of labour, especially of manufacturing and skilled labour, were higher when the price of food was low, than they were when the price of food was high. The reason appeared to him to be, that when food was cheap, the labouring classes, who were the bulk of the population, could expend a greater portion of their earnings on the purchase of articles of clothing, dress, and on the other staple manufactures of the country; consequently, when food was cheap, there was a greater demand for those articles, and a greater trade in them; therefore there was increased activity amongst the manufacturers, and increased employment for their workmen; and, as a necessary consequence, the wages of labour, especially of manufacturing and skilled labour, had a tendency to

rise. On the contrary, when food was dear, as the labouring classes must first obtain the means of subsistence, they were then compelled to expend a greater portion of their earnings on the purchase of food; they were obliged, therefore, to diminish their purchase of articles of clothing, dress, and manufacture. Consequently, when food was dear, there was a diminution in the demand for those articles; stocks of them accumulated in the hands of the dealers; trade became dull and stagnant; the manufacturers employed fewer workmen, and, as a necessary consequence, the wages of labour, especially of manufacturing and skilled labour, had a tendency to fall. Reason, therefore, as well as experience, not only confirmed the position that there was no connexion between high prices and high wages, and low prices and low wages, but showed that, generally speaking, the wages of labour were higher when food was cheap, than they were when food was dear. In fact, the amount of the wages of labour depended on the relation, between the supply of labour and the means of employing it. If there were no alteration in the supply of labour, the wages of labour were greater or less, according as there was more or less employment for labour. The means of employing labour were in proportion to the capital of a country; in proportion to the extent of its trade, commerce, manufactures, and other industrial occupations of its population. As it could hardly be denied that Free Trade would increase the commerce, trade, manufactures, and capital of the country, it followed that, with Free Trade, there would be more means of employing labour; consequently, that the wages of labour would rise, and the condition of the labouring classes would be improved. But many Hon. Gentlemen were apprehensive lest a number of agricultural labourers should be deprived of employment by a Repeal of the Corn Laws. It could not be denied, that if a Repeal of the Corn Laws were to produce a panic among the agricultural classes, and if, in consequence of that panic, a large quantity of land were to be thrown out of cultivation, there would be a diminution in the demand for labour for agricultural purposes; and that might prove, under other than existing circumstances, a serious though temporary evil. But there were causes then at work, which would counteract the effects of any panic that the Repeal of the Corn Laws might occasion. The railroads which were then in progress, or about to be made, would create a great demand for agricultural labour; and, long before those railroads could be completed, the apprehensions of the agricultural classes would be dispelled. As far as the agricultural labourer was concerned, it would be difficult to imagine a more favourable opportunity than the existing one for abolishing the Corn Laws. Of late years agriculture had ceased to be a mere empiric routine, it had become an art founded upon chymistry, vegetable physiology, and the kindred sciences; for the successful cultivation of that art much capital and skill were required. By these means the agricultural produce of some portions of England had been greatly increased, and he believed there was but little exaggeration in the assertions of some of the Hon. Members opposite, that if the whole of England were properly cultivated, a quantity of food could be raised sufficient for a larger population than the existing one,

and at as low a price as it could be imported. To effect such a result, capital and skill would be required on the part of the farmers; and what then would become of the small farmer without capital and skill? The large farmer, with sufficient capital, and acquainted with the improved methods of agriculture, could produce more cheaply, could afford to pay a higher rent, and at the same time obtain a larger profit, than the small farmer without capital and skill. The former could and did undersell him in the market—he could and would outbid him with the landlord; and he prospered while the condition of the other daily became worse and worse (hear, hear). In proportion, therefore, as agriculture improved, in proportion as more capital and skill were required in the cultivation of the soil, the doom of the small farmers without capital became more and more certain, more imminent. They were, in fact, the handloom weavers of agriculture; and their fate was the consequence of the competition of capital and skill with poverty and ignorance. He as well as other Hon. Members deeply regretted the sufferings of individuals; but neither as individuals nor as legislators was it in their power to avert the result. For, in order to prevent it, they would have to stop the accumulation of capital, to check the advancement of knowledge, and to stem back the tide of human progress (hear, hear). When he considered the enormous population, the vast wealth, and the great commerce of the country—when he calculated that stimulus which would be given to the population, the additions which would be made to that commerce and wealth, by a system of Free Trade, he laughed at the notion that the landlords of England could be permanently and seriously injured by Free Trade. It was his firm belief that the value of land was increasing, and would augment, and that that increase in the value of land was owing to the accumulations of the manufacturing and commercial classes. For example, a revolution was about to take place in the means of internal communication. If the country continued prosperous—if commerce and manufactures continued to thrive—before long England would be covered with railroads. Railways would exist between every town of any importance; they would extend into every district possessing either mineral or agricultural wealth. Great Britain would become like one vast city, and the remotest agricultural districts would, as it were, be brought into the immediate vicinity of the Metropolis, and a few hours would convey their productions, their corn, cattle, and other commodities uninjured to the best markets in the world. To whom and to what would they be indebted for these railways, which in many cases would double the value of their landed property? Not to the capital of the landowners, but to the accumulations of the commercial and manufacturing classes. The landowners of England, as much as any set of men, were interested in fostering the commerce, augmenting the trade, and increasing the wealth and capital of the country, for in proportion to that commerce, wealth, and capital, would be the demand for their land, and in proportion to the demand for their land would be its value in the market, and they would be rich. Therefore, if nobler and better motives did not influence him, self-interest alone would induce him, as a landowner,

to give his strenuous support to the measure of the Right Hon. Baronet (hear).

MR. BENNETT said, he had never supported any party in that House. He was totally disconnected from all parties, and consequently felt no animosity towards those Hon. gentlemen who sat on the same side of the House with him, but who had changed their opinions on this subject (hear, hear). He felt that if they had changed their sentiments as they had avowed, they had acted most honourably in the course they had adopted. It was, indeed, a question of much importance, and one upon which he had entertained very strong opinions for many years. With respect to the general principle, he had not changed his opinion; but as to the amount of protection to be given, he did not feel that the same amount was necessary now as in former times. The other night, the Right Hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department said the object of political economy was to devise means of affording the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest number of people; and he quoted the Right Hon. Bart. at the head of the Government as having expressed a similar opinion, and, if he remembered rightly, they said that that ought to be the object of the Government. In those opinions he entirely agreed. He had expressed them in that House many years ago, and at that moment he felt them stronger than ever. It was the duty of the Government and of the Legislature to do everything in their power to afford the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest number of people; and the question now was, whether this measure would afford more happiness to the people in the sense in which the Right Hon. Baronet spoke, than they now enjoyed without it. It was supposed that cheapness of food would afford to the people the greatest amount of happiness. He entirely agreed in the opinion that cheapness of food was most desirable; but they must take care they did not commit a great error, and reduce the people to greater distress by the course they took. Cheapness of food by home production was most desirable; but agreeing as he did in the opinion of the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, that the amount of wages depended on the proportion of the demand to the supply, they must consider whether by cheapness of food they did not lessen the demand for labour, though they did not lessen the supply (hear, hear). Now, from calculations he had made, he would show that every quarter of wheat brought to this country displaced the demand for labour to the amount of 25s. (hear, hear). Then, if they reduced the production of wheat to a certain amount, to that amount the demand for labour would be lowered. The supply would be the same, but the demand would be less, in consequence of the importation of foreign corn. He knew perfectly well that Hon. Gentleman who represented Free Trade opinions told the House that wages would not be reduced by the reduction of the price of food; but was it possible to throw upon the market such an amount of foreign labour, that was, such a destruction of English labour, and not reduce the price of labour? It was said the other night that the amount of labour for a quarter of wheat was only 9s.; but he had calculations to show that the cost of labour would be 25s. for each quarter. He himself had a farm comprising 260 acres of arable land, and on the same farm the pasture

land was equal to one week's labour, the meadow land to two, and the arable land to four, and the labour on that farm came to £900 or £1000 a year. It was set down at £1,000 in his book, for he did keep a book to which he could refer; and here he might say, notwithstanding the account given by the gallant Member opposite (Sir C. Napier) of his ploughing, he (Mr. Benett) doubted whether he kept any ledger at all of his farming, or, if he did, he ventured to say it would show an unprofitable account ("hear," and laughter). Now he had been anxious for years past that the price of the food of the people should be as low as could possibly be grown in this country (hear, hear). He meant grown in this country, because if it were not, he knew that they reduced labour to a greater amount, by lowering wages than they reduced the price of food. He remembered the confiscation of property which had occurred in 1819. The landed interest had recovered from that, and it seemed by the blow which now awaited them, as if they had just been fattened for the slaughter (hear, hear). But the landed interest would not be the only sufferers. He was a self-elected prophet, and he would tell the manufacturers that if this measure was carried, the sooner they made up their accounts, the sooner they left their tall chimneys the better, for severe distress would assuredly fall upon them, as well as upon the agriculturists (hear, hear). The manufacturers talked of their foreign trade. He (Mr. Benett) believed that foreign countries were rising by the same ladder as this country had risen. They were enacting Protecting Laws; they were encouraging their own manufactures; and the consequence would be that their manufactures would soon rival ours and crush them (hear, hear). Much was also said by the Anti-Corn Law League about low wages in the agricultural districts. Did not they know that wages of agricultural labour, like everything else, depended upon supply and demand? Did not they advocate the buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest; and were they to forbid the agriculturists from acting upon this principle? Did they expect that the farmer was to give the labourer double what he asked? (hear, hear). He (Mr. Benett) could not account for such a change as had come over the spirit of the Prime Minister. Could he not have let well alone? The labourer was protected,—everything was thriving,—wheat was 52s. a quarter,—where then was the necessity for this great convulsion? It was to him one of the most astonishing events he had ever witnessed to see a Ministry frightened from their propriety by any cause so slight as a failure in the potato crop, or by a faction so contemptible as the Anti-Corn Law League (hear). It was very extraordinary that on both sides of the House so great changes of opinion had taken place. His predilections had always been with the Conservative party—he had not been able to give his support to the views of Hon. Gentlemen opposite; and now he and his friends found themselves in the singular position of having only two parties from which, as it appeared, a Government could be formed. What a state of misery and misfortune was this for the country to be in. He had not the one party more than the other in his eye; but it surely was a most lamentable state to be in—that they must either take the Leader on that side of the House where sat his Friend the

Noble Lord (Lord J. Russell), or the other side of the House, or they could no longer have any Government (hear). He believed, however, that a new party would be formed, and, as they always found in such cases, a new Leader would start up—a man of talent, who could form and organize an intermediate party (hear).

MR. H. BERKELEY was unwilling to intrude upon the House, but he wished to address a few words in reference to the course pursued by his Hon. colleague (Mr. P. Miles). His Hon. Colleague had placed himself in the front of the battle of Protection, and in the speech he had delivered he had said there was no special necessity for the removal of Protection, and that he believed he was acting for the benefit of the country and the colonies, also, in advocating the protection of British interests. There was no mistake about his speech. He denied that in the views which he advocated his Hon. Colleague represented the opinions of the people of Bristol, or even a majority of that portion of the constituency by whom he was returned to Parliament. It was not for him to say what would be the effect of an appeal to the country on this question; but for that part of the country which he came from, he could speak with confidence, as he was certain that free traders would be returned for the city of Bristol. As a proof of this, he might state that among the 18,000 petitioners from that city for the repeal of the Corn Laws, there were the names of many who had supported his Hon. Colleague, and who had never given him (Mr. Berkeley) a vote. This proved that the friends of total repeal in Bristol were not confined to his supporters alone. He could therefore express, in the name of the constituency which he represented, that their decided opinions were in favour of Free Trade and the abolition of the Corn Laws.

MR. TOLLEMACHE, in reference to some remarks which had fallen, as was understood, from the Hon. Member for Durham, as to the backward state of cultivation in Cheshire, denied that such backwardness existed. If the Hon. Gentleman had possessed as much experience relative to the cultivation of the soil as he did of the manufacturing of cotton goods, his style of speaking on this subject would have been very different from what it was. He was no authority on any matter connected with agriculture, or he might have known that there was as great improvement in the agriculture of Cheshire as of any other part of the country. After the tortuous policy pursued by her Majesty's Government with respect to the Maynooth measure and the Charitable Bequests' Bill of last Session, and in regard to the Corn Laws this Session, he could no longer be one of their supporters (hear). He would support them when he thought them right, but he would not be understood as forming one of a party who had confidence in them as her Majesty's ministers. He deplored the change of opinion that had taken place. He was perfectly satisfied that that change was the result of the most conscientious and honest views; and having once made it they were bound in duty to divulge the new opinions they had formed to the country (hear, hear). They were decidedly wrong in holding office without appealing to the country, laying themselves open to the charge of making use of their powers as a Government for the overthrow of the principles by the profession of which, and to uphold which, they

were raised to office. The stain of personal inconsistency was a trifle to this serious charge (hear, hear). If the agricultural party fell, at all events it would be with honour (cheers).

MR. T. DUNCOMBE said that, cordially concurring in the measure, and believing it to be one which not only did honour to the Ministry that introduced it, but would reflect credit upon the Parliament that adopted it; believing also, after the statement made by the Right Hon. Baronet opposite, that through the influence of public opinion alone could he overcome the difficulties with which he was surrounded, or be sustained against the obloquy with which bigotry and ignorance assailed him (cheers); he (Mr. Duncombe) thought it behoved those who did not owe their seats to the nomination of peers, and were not removable at their pleasure, but owed them to the free and independent choice of the people, to stand up in support of the measure, and not give to it a silent, a lukewarm, or a jealous support (hear, hear). Far be it from him to let Hon. Gentlemen opposite suppose him insensible to the painful and false position in which they were placed; he could make every allowance for those whose powers of change could not keep pace with the conversions they saw going on around them ("hear, hear," and a laugh); far be it from him to deny that a great, a very extraordinary, a peculiar, and simultaneous change of opinion had taken place in the breasts of distinguished men on both sides of the House, concurrently with the advice tendered by the Right Hon. Baronet to his Cabinet in November last; but it did not become Hon. Members on his (Mr. Duncombe's) side of the House to cavil at the change or quarrel with it; it was for them to feel grateful for it, and to admire the ability with which it was carried out (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet had stated that he thought the provision as proposed by himself with respect to the Corn Laws as desirable, but that if it were the sincere wish of the Hon. Gentlemen sitting on the (Protection) benches near him that Protection should altogether cease, he and the rest of the House would be but too happy to accommodate them ("hear," and laughter). But there was another part of this measure to which he wished to call the attention of the Right Hon. Baronet, in connexion with the question put by the Hon. Member for Norfolk. When this measure was proposed, they were told to take it as a whole. Now, he would tell the House that the part of the measure which, after all, was, and would prove, the most valuable to the operative classes in the manufacturing districts, was that part which made the great and important change in the law of settlement (hear, hear). He declared that if they struck out that part of the measure, and if the Ministers did not pledge themselves as much to that portion as they did to that part relating to the Corn Laws, the measure would be valueless in the eyes of the operative classes in the manufacturing districts (hear, hear). The proposed provision to which he alluded was that which, having a retrospective effect, made a five years' industrial residence give a settlement in the towns where the operatives resided. [Sir R. Peel—"A right to relief."] Well, a right to relief. What he contended for was, that those towns should be saddled with the expense of that relief (hear). Having said so much, he would conclude by giving his cordial support both in that

House and out of it to the Ministerial measure; believing as he did that it was a measure calculated not only to extend our commerce, and to benefit agriculture, but also to improve the social and political condition of the people; and, above all things, to enlist in favour of our common country the good will, friendly feeling, and respect of all the civilised world (cheers). With respect to that portion of the House commonly called the agricultural interest, he really did believe that as soon as this protection so degrading to and unworthy of them should have been removed, they would be the first to acknowledge that their apprehensions were unfounded, and when they saw trade flourishing, employment plentiful, prices fixed, rates reduced, and the value of their estates not depreciated, he did hope that they would readily admit that all their alarm had been without just cause, and would regret the error in which they had so long and pertinaciously persevered (cheers).

SIR T. ACLAND was very glad, as a Member of that body which was the subject of the Hon. Gentleman's remarks, to have an opportunity of responding, as he hoped many others could, with the utmost sincerity, to the last appeal which that Hon. Gentleman had made to the agricultural interest. If they found they were the advocates of error, though it was an error which they had shared in common with many others, much their superiors in ability, and which had been received as truth for generations—if they found that if a course contrary to that hitherto pursued was really fraught with blessings, he did believe that, one and all, they should not only acknowledge their error, but cheerfully acquiesce in the decision of Parliament; and whether the measure of the Right Hon. Baronet proved to be for the immediate advantage of the country or not—whether they were called upon to meet that measure as a benefit or as a misfortune, they should, above all, do their duty to their country and to the interest with which they were connected, so that the legislation now in prospect might not be turned to the injury of either (cheers). The first form of Protection was found inconvenient, and the plan of a sliding scale was adopted in 1828. The duties were made to range so that corn should not fall below 64s. In 1842 the Right Hon. Baronet lowered the pivot price, so that corn should range from 54s. to 58s. Prices which were supposed at 80s., in 1815, gradually dropped to 56s., as was shown by the average taken under the Tithe Commutation Act, namely, 7s. a bushel. It was their domestic agriculture which had brought prices down from 10s. to 7s. a bushel. His Right Hon. Friend, in his admirable displays of eloquence which he was sorry to say had not brought entire conviction to his mind, did not explain, as he thought, what were the large grounds on which the decisions of the Government were said to rest. The whole country was in expectation of the disclosure of those indisputable reasons which had influenced a man who had shown greater judgment in the administration of public affairs than any Minister he (Sir T. Acland) had ever known. The Right Hon. Gentleman did nothing to show that he was right, but had made some of his ablest efforts to put others in the wrong. That was not assigning reasons. That was not what Mr. Huskisson would have done (cheers). There were three reasons of policy and one of justice on which the general system of

Protection was maintained. The *dictum* of Mr. Huskisson, which was the only basis of justification on which the course so long pursued by the Legislature in dealing with this question, had not been set aside—that it was absolutely necessary for such a country as this not to be dependent for the existence of her people upon foreign countries. Mr. Huskisson said, let corn be as cheap as you please, provided it be only of domestic growth. That was the rule laid down in every speech of Mr. Huskisson, of Mr. Canning, and of the Right Hon. Baronet (hear, hear). The basis of every law since 1815, had been, that there should be as much protection to domestic agriculture as should enable them, not exclusively, but fully to raise their supply from their own soil. This they could command, when in many cases, as for instance war, they could not command the produce of foreign countries. Other cases, too, might arise when foreign Governments would find it their duty to secure a supply to their own subjects first, and prohibit the export to this country. In all this debate it was remarkable that this, the essential and main spring of the whole argument, had not been touched, it had not been touched in either of the speeches of the Right Hon. Gentleman. He had not been able to discover what ample grounds had arisen in the last three years for reversing the legislation of 30 years preceding, which had been supported by every Government and every leading statesman of the country up to the 1st of November, 1845 (cheers). The principle had been sanctioned by Mr. Huskisson, and by successive Governments and Parliaments. The Noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell), when he made his fatal proposition in the celebrated budget of 1840, had acknowledged the principle of Protection; upon that proposition his Government was overthrown, still it contained in the fixed duty of 8s. the principle of Protection. The agriculturists did not wish for high prices (cheers); how could they wish to see their countrymen suffering from scarcity and famine (cheers). They were not like the manufacturers, who, employing large masses of men, could tell them on a Saturday night that they did not require them. They had to keep their labourers all the year round; and in the course of 20 or 30 years, a connexion of common interest and humanity were formed. The agriculturist did not want high duties at the time of high prices; at a period of high price a fixed duty of 8s. could not be held; but at a time of low prices, a glut might come in under the system of Free Trade, prices would be depressed, and a great degree of agricultural distress would be created. That was the plain fact, and if the agriculturists did not receive a remuneration for the investment of their capital, it was impossible they could continue to furnish the supply. The farmers had believed that the settlement made in 1842 was a permanent one, and had made increased efforts in a reliance upon that law (hear, hear), had spent more capital, and introduced more skill in the cultivation of the soil than before. This should be his answer to a portion of the speech of the Hon. Member for Durham, whom he congratulated on the improved tone of his address on a former evening. He hoped it was an earnest that when these dissensions should have passed away, they should have his advocacy in a more generous cause. He would tell Hon. Gentlemen what his answer was to those imputations which

had been thrown upon the landlords of starving the people and injuring the commerce of the country for their own advantage. In the ten years ending in 1815, the price of wheat was 97s. 6d. per quarter; and they would find that for the five years ending in 1804 the prices averaged between 105s. and 106s. Since then prices had gradually fallen; and in the ten years ending 1825, the average price of wheat was 56s. 7d.; in the ten years ending 1815 it was 57s. 4d.; and for the last four years it had been 51s. In thirty years, therefore, the price of wheat had been reduced one-half (hear, hear). This was his answer to those who charged the landlords with maintaining a law which made the food of the people dear, in order to serve their own interests ("hear, hear," from the Protection benches). A printed paper was sent to him by post the other morning, by a gentleman who approved the measure of the Right Hon. Baronet, and who was evidently an advocate of Free Trade, in which a comparison was made between the exports and imports in the three years 1822, 1823, and 1824, and the three years 1842, 1843, and 1844. The official value of the imports in the former period was about £35,000,000; while in the latter period it was £70,000,000. The exports during the same period had increased in a similar proportion; and the statistics showed that the traffic of the mercantile community had doubled during the period he had mentioned. Every one who heard or read those statements must admit that the Corn Law had worked well for the whole population. It had worked well for the agriculturists, who were satisfied with it, who were thankful for it, and who desired its continuance ("hear," from the Protection benches), and it had worked equally well for the exporters and consumers. What more could they desire? (hear). He would like to know what circumstances had occurred since the adoption of the law of 1842 to justify the measure now proposed by the Right Hon. Baronet? He must say that he could not resign his judgment to that of any other person, but he would continue at all risks to support the law of 1842, until he was convinced that an alteration was necessary. He asked, then, what circumstances had occurred between 1842 and 1846 to justify the proposed change? As one reason for his present proposition, the Right Hon. Baronet had told them, with a feeling which such a subject would naturally excite in the heart of such a Minister, that a lamentable scarcity of provisions was anticipated in Ireland. He thought he (Sir T. Acland) could dispose of that point by repeating what had been stated by several Hon. Members on Tuesday night, that if the Right Hon. Baronet had come down on the first day of the session, and had proposed a suspension of the Corn Law, Parliament would have passed the measure within a week, had it been requisite (hear, hear). Had the Right Hon. Baronet or his colleagues thought fit, on the 1st of November, on their own responsibility, to suspend the law ("hear, hear," from the Protectionists), he was convinced not a single voice would have been raised against such a proceeding (hear), but that it would have been approved and sanctioned by Parliament (hear, hear). But the Right Hon. Baronet had not taken this course. He was grieved to say that the Right Hon. Gentleman had united to a proposal, which might have been

clear and simple, the most litigated question of the present day. What he complained of was, that the Right Hon. Baronet, even when warned by the differences which existed in the Cabinet, did not separate the two branches of this question, at least in point of time; and that, either acting upon his own discretion, or with the concurrence of the Cabinet, he did not adopt some prompt measures to relieve pressing distress, leaving it to the good sense of Parliament to determine whether the time had arrived for an alteration of the Corn Law (cheers from the Protection benches). Admitting the great evils which might result from the failure of the potato crop, he thought the Right Hon. Baronet had not done them justice in preventing them from sanctioning with one heart and one voice, as he believed they would have done, such measures as might have been deemed advisable for alleviating the anticipated distress. The time to change their policy was when there was an alarm that they would not be able to retain office by the adoption of any other; and even then, it would be more advisable to hand over the alteration to others. He could not see what necessity there was for the change; and, granting that there was a necessity, he could not see that such a law as that now adopted would effect the remedying of the evil. If there was distress in Ireland, and he did not doubt that such was the case, why did they not take the large quantity of corn which was known to be in, out of bond? (hear, hear). Would not that fully supply the deficiency? Under the present law relative to corn and provisions the agriculturists had been induced to make exertions such as were made in no other country, and by the sudden and unlooked for, unjust and unnecessary alteration they would, of course, experience incalculable mischief. He would, however, do the best he could to keep their hearts up (laughter). In his opinion the most effectual way of taking advantage of a good law was to improve their estates to the extremest possible degree; and, on the same principle, he deemed the wisest way of meeting a bad law was by redoubling their exertions (hear, hear). Such was his general view of the merits of the scheme, and he was not prepared to accept it at the hands of the Right Hon. Baronet. He could not in three short weeks read backwards the lesson which the Right Hon. Baronet and he had together learned, the one indeed as the teacher and he himself as the humble follower (hear, hear). They had been at the same school for three years, and, for his own part, having paid attention to what had been taught, he could not so speedily unlearn. His adherence to his principles might be deemed bigotry; but as he acted on conviction he acted confidently. What, indeed, was the reason for the change that had come over them—what the cause? Why, the Anti-Corn Law League, and its quarter of a million fund (hear). But by the first subscription of £100,000 and by the second of £250,000, had not the League shown that if those engaged in manufactures could in so short a time collect together so large a sum, they had very little need to make any complaints of the existing state of things? (hear). The Noble Lord the Member for London had been the first to move in the matter, and to tell the truth he had the best right to it, for he had only to make one step for-

ward, while the Right Hon. Baronet had to make five hundred (hear, hear). And it had been the pressure of that compact and well-organized opposition, of which the Noble Lord was so distinguished a Member, seconded and vigorously seconded by the untiring exertions of the League, that had forced the Right Hon. Baronet onwards; but neither the bearing of the one nor the cries of the other should have dismayed a Minister or destroyed a party, who unitedly had driven them from office and defeated their principles. If that Minister had been firm, that party would still have sufficed for his support. The Right Hon. Baronet had distinctly told them that office had been re-taken, not because of the policy formerly professed having proved weak, but because, if office had not been re-taken, the Sovereign and the country would have been without a Government; but this was no admission that Protection was an evil, and until that was made apparent, he (Sir T. Acland) would persist in maintaining that it was a virtue. When a people were determined to carry a measure, and the Minister pledged himself to his Sovereign that such should be carried, he firmly believed that, sooner or later, be the Minister who he may, and be the opponents who they may, the pledge of the Minister would be redeemed (hear). He would, however, join in no factious opposition; he would not worry the measure of his Right Hon. Friend; but if, the Crown having proposed the measure, the House of Commons, after deliberation, should sanction it, his Right Hon. Friend need expect no further trouble from him (hear, hear). If, however, the division should turn out to be what is called a close division, no one knew better than his Right Hon. Friend that he could never carry this measure through this Parliament, and the sooner he turned them to the right about the better ("hear," and laughter). He would not yield to the Right Hon. Baronet's requisition to submit to a necessity, entirely he believed of his own creation.

LORD A. PAGET said, he had listened with a great deal of attention to this debate, and he thought many Hon. Members had been a little too hard upon the Right Hon. Baronet, for he thought that nothing but a sense of public duty could have induced him to bring forward this measure. He thought the Right Hon. Baronet might, if any public man might, be satisfied that he acted from conscientious motives. All he could say with regard to this measure was that he gave it his warmest support. He belonged to the forlorn hope led by the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton, and it was not likely that he should change his opinions. It had been said that no law should regulate wages; he said that no law should regulate the price of the necessities of life.

MR. W. B. BARING next addressed the House, but he was almost inaudible in the gallery. We understood him to reply to some of the arguments of Sir T. Acland. Had the Hon. Baronet found it to be impossible that he could dispense with perfection? He (Mr. Baring) denied that he had; on the contrary, he had shown that it could be dispensed with. The present motion was an appeal to the justice of the landed interest, and in order that their answer to that should be satisfactory it must be unanimous (hear, hear).

On the motion of MR. C. BRUCE the debate was adjourned.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20.

The adjourned debate was resumed by

MR. C. BRUCE, who said that the Right Hon. Gentleman, the Paymaster of the Forces had alleged as his reason for supporting the Government measure, that it would put a stop to agitation. But if the measure did produce the result of putting a stop to the agitation against the Corn Laws, it would only be to substitute other agitations, much more dangerous than that which would be so done away with. Other institutions might be attacked and abandoned as the system of Corn Laws had been. The existence of tithes, of an established church, and of an hereditary aristocracy, the law of primogeniture, the monarchy itself, might be made the mark of an agitation as intense at least as that against which he and his friends were now contending. With a steady Government there would be no cause for fear from agitation. It was popular agitation which in the present instance had been the principal means of forcing from the Government a declaration in favour of the Repeal of the Corn Laws. The importance of putting an end to the Anti-Corn Law agitation did not impress itself so strongly on his mind as to make him disposed to agree to the withdrawal of Protection from agriculture. Concession in such circumstances was a premium on agitation, and the advantage to be derived from a measure carried by such means was in the inverse ratio to the violence with which its adoption had been pressed. The flourishing circumstances the Right Hon. Baronet had described arose from the revival of commercial energies after a period of depression, and the increase of railway speculation; but the short experience of that prosperity was not enough to warrant such a change in the whole of that protective policy under which England had risen to be the queen among nations. He could not sacrifice his own opinions; he could not consent to embark with the Right Hon. Baronet on that boundless ocean of Free Trade, which no British navigator had ever explored, from which no British pilot had ever returned. The Right Hon. Baronet might promise to waft them over a smooth sea to richer lands, but he dreaded the unknown shore; the Right Hon. Baronet told them they would find it a region glowing with wealth and abundance; but could he assure them that its luxuriant vegetation would not generate a poisonous atmosphere, under which the constitution of Englishmen would pine and die? Instead of oceans smooth, favouring breezes, and cloudless skies, he saw the horizon overcast, the sky darkened, and the ship dashing on to the breakers. And he felt compelled, as far as his vote enabled him, to forbid the firing of that gun which, booming over those turbid waters, should give the signal for sailing!

MR. P. SCROPE entirely disagreed with the opinions expressed on the opposite side of the House as to the measure of the Right Hon. Baronet involving the country in difficulty and distress. He knew of no atmosphere so noxious as that of the forcing-room of Protection, into which the Legislature of this country had endeavoured to bring so many interests, and thus to deprive them of the free and open air of competition. The real question to be discussed, as had been said by the Hon. Member for Berkshire, was whether Protection was

right or wrong. If it was wrong, its abolition should not be delayed. He had nothing whatever to do with either the attacks on, or the defence of, the Right Hon. Baronet and his colleagues; but, at the same time, he would say that, however fruitlessly he sought to understand their long continued opposition to Free Trade, he did admire their moral courage in acting, at length, upon the conviction that the principles of that policy were necessary to the prosperity and existence of the empire. The Right Hon. Baronet had overwhelmed them with proofs of his past legislation in respect to the lessening of prohibitory duties having met with the most triumphant success, and had benefited, not only the great mass of the community, but also those from whom Protection had been withdrawn. The Hon. Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. S. O'Brien) in the able speech made by him on another evening, had ridiculed what he called that hard-hearted dogma of a stern political economy which directed nations to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market. He (Mr. Scrope) had always understood it as a maxim in our trade, and had always believed that those best acquainted with its wisdom were the farmers of Northamptonshire. Another point in the same speech was, a declaration that it was an injustice to look beyond the products of British industry for the satisfaction of their wants; but did the Hon. Member scrupulously adhere in practice to his theory? Would they not, had they that morning seen him breakfasting, have viewed his table covered with Chinese tea, with Indian sugar, and would they not have seen these combined delicacies sipped with a silver spoon from the mines of Mexico? And if they had had the pleasure of dining with the Hon. Member, would they not have enjoyed, in moderation, of course, the richest vintages of Portugal, of Spain, of Germany, and of France? (laughter). And if they were permitted by the forms of the House to strip that Hon. Gentleman, would they not find Saxon wool, Russian flax, American cotton, and Italian silk? And if they left him only and solely that particular garment which was the product of British industry, would they not leave him in a state less fitted for that assembly than the primitive society to which he wished to bring them,

“Where wild in woods the naked savage ran?”

(laughter). The Hon. Member for Knaresborough had vehemently cheered the expressions of the opinions alluded to in the speech of the Hon. Member for Northamptonshire, and still more vehemently that attack in which the Hon. Member had indulged, upon machinery; but, to carry out the illustration, would they not, if the Hon. Member were sincere, find him coming down to the house dressed in skins, and when hungry, following his prey with a club—or rather, without a club, grubbing roots up with his teeth, and tearing them with his nails? (laughter). The Hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne had fairly and honorably admitted that the arguments against the Corn Laws had produced an effect upon the country. If so, and if the principle of Protection was indefensible (and the onus of proof was upon the Protectionists), and they could not convince the country, he called upon them to abolish laws odious in their character and suspicious in their motives (“oh!”). They were sus-

picious in their motives if their object and effect were to keep up rents ; that was all he meant. He called upon the Protectionists no longer to interfere between the people of this country and their supply of food, but to allow them to avail themselves of the bounty of Providence and the fruits of their untiring industry and unexampled ingenuity.

MR. NEWDEGATE said that the Hon. Member who had just sat down had taunted the Hon. Member for Knaresborough for violating his principle of Protection in the materials of the dress he wore. But the Hon. Member (Mr. P. Scrope) laboured under a misapprehension, common with his school ; he would assume that they (the Protectionists) were advocates of prohibition, not protection (hear). He (Mr. Newdegate) acknowledged that the true principle of trade was to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest ; but he denied that it was the true principle of a Government, the function of Government, to produce wealth, but to provide for the happiness and comfort of the whole kingdom (hear, hear). He could not understand that the doctrine which was true as applied to trade was true as applied to Government. If so, why did they not act upon it in providing for the national defence ? Why did they not buy their army in the cheapest market ? Men could be procured cheaper abroad than at home. The Hon. Member who had just sat down had said that the repeal of the Corn Laws would reduce the price of corn or it would not, and if not, there was no ground of complaint against their repeal. But he forgot that the law was enacted to insure a steadiness of price (hear, hear). Then, he said, that it was hard that manufacturers who paid a tax in the price of corn were called upon to pay other taxes. He was prepared to prove that the manufacturer did not pay such double taxes. In the next place, the Hon. Member said it was a mere question of justice ; but the political economists were to prove that the manufacturers were the majority ; whereas there was evidence before the House that they were not the majority. He regretted to differ from the Right Hon. Baronet ; he was in some measure his representative, as the Right Hon. Baronet had large property in the county he represented. But neither this consideration nor ties of friendship should deter him from doing his duty to his constituents. It was a fact well worthy of attention, that amongst the vast variety of trades which were exercised in this country, there was not one the wages of which would not be affected by the proposed measure. It was a measure in which they could not proceed by halves, and it was one the operation of which time alone could fully develope ; no man could calculate its remote consequences. He should not trouble the House with any very long calculations, but should briefly call their attention to a few facts :—In the year 1814 the rental of this country was, in round numbers, £39,000,000 ; in the year 1843 it was, £45,000,000, being a difference of £6,000,000 ; or, to state it more exactly, of £6,347,910. Now, that was the sole increase in the income derived from land, notwithstanding the enclosure of waste land, and notwithstanding the large investments for the improvement of land. What a contrast to that state of things did the value of house property present ! The value of houses of all sorts, including factories,

was, in the year 1814, no more than £16,259,399, whereas, in 1843, it amounted to £38,430,730. Thus it might be seen that the land had only been augmented in value to the extent of 12 per cent., while the houses had been raised considerably upwards of 100 per cent. By every variety of plan that could be adopted for that purpose the value of agricultural produce had been diminished—the value of our exports had been depressed, and now it was proposed to put an end to the only remaining protection which the industry of the country possessed. He should now say a word or two with respect to the peculiar burdens upon land. Including tithes, those burdens could not reasonably be estimated at less than £12,000,000. That tithes ought to be included in the burdens on land was a position laid down by Mr. Ricardo, and he presumed that his authority would not be disputed by Hon. Members, if they admitted any authority whatever. Then Mr. M'Culloch quoted Dr. Paley, to show that which a Churchman would probably not be over anxious to display—namely, the evil tendency of tithes in discouraging the improvement of land. Hon. Members might dispute the pressure of this burden, and they might do so with respect to any of the imposts under which land suffered; but they ought to go through them item by item, as the onus rested upon them. He had expressed opinions which had not been taken up lightly, and while a majority of that House had maintained those opinions for years, he did not consider it profitable in a constitutional point of view to yield them up at the dictation of any Minister, though he proved himself the master and dictator of his Cabinet (hear). It was true that his tone had been somewhat modified lately, but when he heard his first address coupled with strange terms applied to the aristocracy and the monarchy, he could not help looking at the emblem of the authority of the House on the table (the mace), and thinking it was well that the statute-book stood between that and the Right Honourable Baronet. He could not believe that overcoming his colleagues, changing his opinion, taking the country by surprise, going over to his adversaries, and adopting their policy, was the conduct of a Constitutional Minister (“hear, hear,” from Colonel Sibthorp); nor could he approve of it until he saw him submit the question for the opinion of the Constitutional Tribunal by an appeal to the people. He must say that the Right Hon. Baronet was the Minister of Her Majesty’s necessity, for she had indicated her opinion by calling for another, and a minister for the necessities of the country, and not for its interests. Although he might be the same man, he was not the same minister. An unusual tone had been adopted on this question and the Right Hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War had used the argument that if they did not yield now they would have to yield to force. He should not have been surprised to hear such an argument used by the leaders of an agitation, but when Her Majesty’s Ministers turned round, and, seizing them by the throat, said to them, “Yield up your principles, or you must yield to force,” he could but ask where that force was to come from, and declare that such terms ill became an English Minister (hear, hear). He was rejoiced to see the talent and determination displayed by a broken party, which had been

taken at a disadvantage; but he must tell them that they still had need of perseverance, and that, with that perseverance, the country would hereafter appreciate their conduct. They had been told that they were raising dissension among different classes; but against that charge he had a right to appeal to all the former conduct of the agricultural interest in Parliament. The Noble Lord who had moved the address had told them that they would create a modern war of the roses, and set class against class; but did not the constitution of the party give the denial to that? Had they not a Plantagenet and a Baring (laughter), a Granby, a Miles, and an Arkwright? And the argument implied an utter want of knowledge of those with whom they had to deal, not only in point of character, but of pursuits and habits.

MR. BARKLY, who spoke in so low a tone of voice as to be frequently inaudible in the gallery, said, that though he represented an agricultural constituency he came to the consideration of this question as calmly as to any question of social improvement. It was true he was connected with the Protectionist party, and that his constituents sent him as a Protectionist, still they only behoved him to be more careful that the judgment to which he came should not be guided by prejudice or self-interest. The question was, whether it would most conduce to the interests of the British empire at large to maintain Protection for some time longer, or whether it was wiser at once to abandon it? All that had been stated in favour of a continuance was, that the Protection of native interests had been for centuries mixed up with the policy of this country. Now, his opinion was, that the rules of political economy were as true, and as capable of proof, as any proposition in Euclid; still he had held, with the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, that those principles ought to be applied with great care. He saw that Right Hon. Gentleman now coming forward with a broad and systematic plan, and though the change of opinion of one man, however eminent, or of twenty men, could not induce him to support a measure which he thought wrong in principle, yet the only question now to be determined was the rate of progress at which they should return to sounder principles, and the state of parties in that House did not render it any longer feasible or possible to retain restrictions upon the trade in corn. He did not consider the present proposal as any change of opinion or any conversion, but only as an advance. He did not think that the country or the farming interests would after all suffer much from the introduction of foreign corn, and indeed any apprehensions were exceedingly foolish, because we had always imported foreign corn, and between 9,000,000 and 10,000,000 quarters had been brought in within the last five years; and whenever there was a bad season here, 2,000,000 or 3,000,000 quarters were usually brought in from the foreign market. In fact, it was not an exaggerated statement to say that 1-10th of our population on an average were dependent on foreigners for their supply of food. With respect to the condition of the labourer, the only way in which any improvement could be effected was by improving his moral relations; and he earnestly hoped that measures would be taken for that purpose.

If they had cheap food the Government might take, whereas, in 1843, temporary cheapness, and propound measures to improve that the land tition of the labourer. They had been told that, by b<sup>12</sup> per cent., labourer of this country into competition with those of 100 per countries, they would be reducing him to the condition of purpose sian serf; but for the last forty years the farmers of this country ue of been in open competition with labourers who were worse fed and worse clothed than any other people in the world—he meant those of Ireland; but if competition with them had not reduced the condition of the labourer in England, why should competition with the labourer of Russia or other countries have that effect? In conclusion, he would say that he did not feel the same apprehensions that some entertained as to the effect this measure would have on the landed interests of the country.

MR. BENNETT (the new Member for Suffolk) and several other Hon. Gentlemen rose together. The prevalent cries were for the new Member, and Mr. Bennett proceeded to address the House, but was very indistinctly heard in the gallery. He was understood to commence by claiming that indulgence which ever was shown to gentlemen who addressed the House for the first time. He expressed himself opposed to the opinions which had been delivered by the Hon. Gentleman who had just sat down, and his great surprise at the conduct of the Right Hon. Baronet, in proposing such great alterations affecting the landed interest, and the welfare of the country. Knowing the great ability and high standing of the Right Hon. Baronet, he must confess that he was greatly grieved to see him desert those principles which he considered of even more importance to this country than all others, the protection and maintenance of the Protestant religion of this kingdom (ironical cheers). The return of Members for five counties without any attempt at opposition from the League was significant as to the feeling of the agricultural districts. He wished he could see the Solicitor-General in his place, as he wished to ask the Hon. and Learned Gentleman if he was prepared to assist him in defending agriculture; because when the Solicitor-General was a candidate for the borough of Cambridge he made a speech in which he alluded to the folly of the Free Traders, and of those who would introduce such a measure as that which would do away with Protection to agriculture, in favour of which he spoke in the strongest terms. He did not know that the Solicitor-General, like the Right Hon. Baronet, had pronounced himself wrong upon every former occasion; and, therefore, he wanted to ask him, would he now assist in maintaining that Protection? After some further observations, which were inaudible in the gallery, the Hon. Gentleman resumed his seat.

MR. MUNTZ rose with other Hon. Members, who gave way. The Hon. Gentleman exclaimed "Mr. Speaker!" in a stentorian tone of voice, which elicited a burst of laughter, and then, with much more than his usual rapidity of utterance, which rendered it exceedingly difficult to understand him at times, proceeded to say that the House was surely in a rather unfortunate state; but he was one of the most fortunate in it (a laugh). He had no change to make in his opinions, those which he had asserted for the last twelve years (hear,

taken at a disadvantage, no speech to apologise for, and no fear of being con-  
 need of persey of his own mouth. Last, not least, he had no quarrel  
 would here Right Hon. Baronet ("hear, hear," and laughter). It was  
 they were that if he could have had his own way the Right Honour-  
 charge Baronet would not have been in the House, and he had done  
 agri at he could to keep him out. But he was most happy to see him  
 where he was, and what he was doing (laughter and cheers). He  
 differed from many gentlemen near him, and around him, and many  
 opposite. But, with all that difference of opinion, he ventured to  
 say that there was not a man in the House more anxious for the  
 passing of the measure with a triumphant majority than he was  
 (cheers). The passing of the measure would tear away the veil that  
 concealed all the mischiefs that had afflicted this country for many  
 years; and it would enable men to say whether or no this or that  
 one was owing to the Corn Law. It was impossible for him to say  
 that those mischiefs were coming to an end. He had often told the  
 Right Hon. Baronet that he must take one of two courses. One  
 was to reduce things to a continental level. Let the Right Hon.  
 Baronet take what course he pleased. His opinion was that he  
 had taken the wrong course; but, as he had taken that course,  
 he would do everything he could to carry out his views (great  
 laughter). Gentlemen might laugh; he was very glad to see them  
 laugh. He was certain that anything was better than the present  
 uncertain state of things, and that that uncertainty should come to  
 an end (hear, hear). He apprehended no cause for regretting their  
 repeal (hear, hear). But another subject, and not the least impor-  
 tant, which they must take into their consideration, was the effect of  
 the extension of railway communication. He (Mr. Muntz) resided  
 in a central part of the kingdom, where railways had been very  
 generally established, and where one of the principal articles used  
 in the construction of railways was extensively manufactured. He  
 did not hesitate to say that if railway speculation ceased to-morrow,  
 the rate of payment for labour and the value of iron would fall fifty  
 per cent. The amount of labour employed in the manufacture of  
 various articles used in the construction of railways had a very  
 important bearing upon this question. It appeared to him that  
 the effect of these circumstances was fully equal to that of those  
 referred to by Adam Smith, as affecting the remuneration of labour  
 in connexion with the price of corn. He must ask the indulgence  
 of the House, for he did not often trouble them (hear, hear), while  
 he alluded to two other subjects. The Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R.  
 Peel) had stated the other night, and had challenged contradiction,  
 that the reduction of Protective duties had not produced any  
 injurious effect upon articles of home manufacture. He (Mr.  
 Muntz) could show that this statement was incorrect, by referring  
 to one article which was used in that branch of manufactures with  
 which he was connected—he alluded to zinc. In 1815 the whole of  
 the zinc consumed in this country was manufactured here. About  
 that time, however, a considerable reduction of duty was effected,  
 and the price fell from £75 to £45 per ton. In 1824 a further  
 alteration was made, and the price was reduced to £15 per ton. The  
 present price of zinc was £20 per ton; but it was not worth the

while of any one in this country to continue the manufacture, and the consequence was that all the zinc now used here was manufactured on the continent. This had been the effect of the reduction of duty ("Hear, hear," from the Protection benches). It must not be supposed, because he had mentioned this fact, that he was not an advocate for the Repeal of the Corn Laws. On the contrary, he was most anxious for the adoption of such a measure (hear, hear); but he wished to show Hon. Gentlemen upon what a reed they were leaning. It appeared to him that any other article might be as much affected by the repeal of Protective duties as zinc had been ("hear, hear," from the Protectionists). The zinc manufacturers of this country could not compete with those of Silesian Poland, where the wages of workmen were only 6d. a day, in consequence of the expense of labour. In England zinc could not be manufactured for less than £20 a ton, while foreigners could manufacture for £14 a ton. He (Mr. Muntz) challenged any one successfully to contradict this statement. He mentioned the circumstance to show that it was very easy to make a "gross" declaration, which, when examined in detail, might prove to be inaccurate. The Right Hon. Baronet had also made a statement to which he wished to refer, on another very important subject. He (Sir R. Peel) had stated that, in 1815 the average price of wheat was 102s. a quarter, while it was now 64s. (An Hon. Member—51s.) It was put 64s. in the paper, but he would take it at 51s. The Right Hon. Baronet had said that some allowance ought to be made for the variation in the value of money between 1815 and the present time. The value of money had fallen during that period fifty per cent., and if they took the price of wheat in 1815 at 102s. and now at 51s., they would see that the value of that commodity had fallen in a similar proportion. The Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) now stood in a position very different from what he had hitherto done. It was supposed until lately that he was infallible, (a laugh) but now he acknowledged that for nearly forty years he had been wrong *in toto*. (laughter). He could tell the Right Hon. Baronet that the people of this country were in the greatest doubt and uncertainty as to what course he might take on other subjects (hear). A great many people had come to him (Mr. Muntz), and had said, "What are we to think? What are we to expect? What are we to have next?" The Right Hon. Baronet tells us that now he is taking the right course, but hitherto he has all along been wrong." He (Mr. Muntz) could not help feeling that the Right Hon. Baronet must have, been wrong (laughter). He thought it was too much to anticipate that within the next two or three years the Right Hon. Baronet, having the effect of the repeal of the Corn Laws before his eyes, might come down and say, with reference to some other measure,— "It is impossible to resist the experience of the last two years. It would not be honest if I did not acknowledge that my former convictions were erroneous. I have for 40 years believed in one sole monetary system; but the experience of the last few years has convinced me that I have been entirely wrong" (laughter). Was it too much—and he asked Hon. Members on both sides, Whigs, Tories, and Radicals—to expect such a proceeding on the part of the Right

Hon. Baronet? ("hear, hear," and laughter). He (Mr. Muntz) wished to get them into his boat. He made no secret of it; they ought all to pull together—poor and rich. If he could get them all into his boat, and if they rowed as if they were rowing for their lives, he would answer for their reaching a safe haven (laughter).

MR. DISRAELI—I leave the Right Hon. Baronet, the First Minister, to settle the question of the currency with his new supporter, to whom we are indebted for a protection speech almost equal in force to that delivered by the Noble Lord the Member for Liverpool (hear, hear). The Hon. Gentleman who has just addressed us seems to think that after the declaration of the Government all is doubtful; but there is one point on which no doubt can any longer exist (hear, hear). Whatever may be the opinions of the two parties that have now entered into this great controversy on the main question before the House; however fervent may be our convictions of the advantages of protection; and however sanguine may be the expectations of Hon. Gentlemen opposite as to the consequences of competition, there is one point on which we are all agreed, and with respect to which there can be no misunderstanding, and it is this—that Her Majesty's Ministers have changed their opinions (cheers). Whether the opinions they formerly pursued, or the opinions which they are about to follow, are the right ones, the most expedient, and the most calculated to benefit this country—this I apprehend to be the real question before the House (hear, hear). This is the question which, with the indulgence of the House, I shall endeavour to consider, (hear, hear). I shall endeavour to offer some suggestions, which I hope may make Hon. Gentlemen hesitate before they accede to the great change which is proposed. I shall endeavour to show that the system, which is called the system of protection, is not that odious system which it has been so long assumed to be (hear, hear). I pledge myself to meet the question on its merits, and though I may not be capable of the arguments, I will not shrink from them (hear). But before I presume to offer these considerations to the House in support of that system, it would be more convenient to notice the arguments offered by her Majesty's Government in favour of the change which is proposed. This will clear the course—illustrate the way—help to that end which I aspire to reach, and very much facilitate the discussion (hear, hear). We have been addressed in support of the measure of Government by three Cabinet Ministers. It is but due to the Right Hon. Baronet the First Minister—due to his position, and to the more comprehensive statement which he made of the case of the Ministers, that perhaps I should previously notice what that Right Hon. Baronet said. He seemed to complain that the greater part of the discussion had been wasted on the conduct of party. I have no wish myself to enter into the subject; nor should I have noticed it, had not the Right Hon. Baronet, in reference to the use which he made of the word "party," seemed to entertain on that point ideas very different from those which animate and influence Gentlemen on these benches (hear, hear). We have, indeed, heard from these benches many comments on the conduct of party, but we associate with that word very different ideas from those which the Right Hon. Baronet seems to entertain (hear,

hear). We do not understand that party is anything but public opinion embodied (cheers). We protest against the doctrine of the Right Hon. Baronet, that there is a distinction between political party and public opinion (cheers). If party is, then, public opinion embodied; whether it represents the opinion of a majority or a minority; it, at all events, represents the opinions of a great section of the community of this country, where the nation is divided into parties, and where great results are brought about by public discussion, and by the organization also, no doubt of material interests (hear). By these two agencies, reason and property, we arrive in time at the solution of controversies the most difficult; and such is the beneficial consequence of these agencies, that however great may have been the force of controversial strife—however a question may have agitated the nation, you find, and you will always find, that when the great question is settled by the legitimate exercise of what the Right Hon. Baronet called party, but which is, in fact, national organization—the nation is contented and satisfied with the result, and you seldom have the question re-opened (hear, hear). We do not complain of the Right Hon. Baronet changing his opinion (hear)—opinion is not in the power of human will; but what we complain of is, not that he has deferred too much to public opinion; but that he has outraged public opinions (cheers)—that he has prevented that legitimate action in the settlement of questions by the aid of party or embodied public opinion, and that he has arrived at and probably achieved a result which will not be, on account of the mode in which it has been brought about, satisfactory to the community (cheers). We say, and say with reason, that by the aid of that great mass of public opinion which we represent, the Right Hon. Baronet was raised into power; and that a Parliament was elected which represents our section (cheers). If the Noble Lord opposite, who represents another section of public opinion, had succeeded in being Minister—if his side had succeeded in being the majority, and had settled these questions, we should then have yielded, because we should have felt that the solution of these questions had been brought about by constitutional means—by the legitimate operation of public opinion (hear, hear). But we feel that this question is not now settled, and cannot be settled in a constitutional manner (hear). It is not merely that we have the sad spectacle of the Right Hon. Baronet surrounded by a majority, who while they give him their votes, protest in their speeches against his policy (“no, no,” and cheers),—it is not that; but there is the flagrant scandal of a Minister bringing forward under such circumstances a great question, when he has announced that the majority of his Cabinet is against him (cheers). Well, then, public opinion is not fairly dealt with; and when we complain of the Right Hon. Baronet not treating his party fairly, we do not speak of the 300 gentlemen on these benches, but we speak of the great body of the community, and of that public opinion which results from their convictions (cheers). I have now concluded, perhaps, the only observations I shall make on this point, in answer to what has fallen from the Right Hon. Baronet. The Right Hon. Baronet proceeded to indicate what he considered the proper subject of discussion, and I confess that he, in his description

of what should be the proper subject of discussion, at once described and indicated the fallacy of his own position, and the fatal policy he would have us pursue. For he says, "I call on you not to discuss the party question, but,"—to do what?—"to meet an emergency and to construct a system." Now, if there be any contrast more complete than another it must be between a system which would be permanent and an emergency which, however managed, must to a certain degree be temporary. This was, I think, at once the blot of the position of the Right Hon. Baronet in the very first step which he counsels us to take. If we were considering the policy of the Minister of a foreign country, and if we brought to that consideration calmer spirits than now animate us, we should at once say that this was a great mistake. I say that it would be a great mistake in the Noble Lord opposite, in dealing with a national emergency; it would be unwise in him to say, "I have measures to meet this emergency, but at the same time I ask you to reconstruct your commercial policy in accordance with the policy which I have always advocated, and for which therefore you are prepared." But what will you say to a Minister who comes with an emergency, asks you to reconstruct your commercial system, and at the same time tells you that you must do this in total opposition to all he before taught you as being correct? (cheers). Now, Sir, as regards the emergency—namely, the state of Ireland—I must protest against any one in this House warning us not to speak of that country in a tone of levity. I am conscious of never having spoken of Ireland in a tone of levity, though I may speak in a tone of levity of a feeble policy with reference to Ireland (hear, hear). But, separating the construction of "a new system" and what the Right Hon. Baronet called on a former occasion "a great social revolution," there are two or three points which it would be well for some Member of the Cabinet to clear up. I believe there are no more Free Trade Members of the Cabinet to speak (a laugh), but perhaps we may be favoured with the opinion of a Protection Member; for it is a remarkable characteristic of the present anomalous state of affairs that we have at the same time a Protection Cabinet and a Free Trade Minister (cheers). Now, Sir, with regard to the point to which I am calling the attention of the House. The Right Hon. Gentleman said that he feels the difficulty under which he necessarily labours in himself proposing these changes in our commercial system, that he wished these changes should be proposed by others, but at the same time he informs us that he proposed these identical measures in Cabinet long before he meditated the rupture of that Cabinet or perhaps anticipated the opposition he received in it. How, then, does he reconcile the two statements? How does he reconcile the fact that he did propose these measures to the Cabinet, which unexpected opposition to them ultimately broke up, with the statement recently so often repeated that he wished others had brought them forward? Now, Sir, I would notice the commercial principle—if you can call it the commercial principle—on which the Right Hon. Gentleman seems to have founded the measures he proposes. We are ready, as regards the emergency, to do all that any Minister entitled to the confidence of Parliament would recommend. We are prepared to do for Ireland—I do not

say all that Ireland can require, but all that human judgment can devise; but we don't understand the position of the Right Hon. Gentleman with respect to this subject. It has been involved in great obscurity. The Right Hon. Gentleman says, "I was for opening the ports;" the statement was met by a cheer—a response of sympathy from these (the Protectionist) benches, and then taking a rapid view of the economical history of the country, proving that the ports had often been opened, and beneficially opened, the Right Hon. Baronet turned round and said, "Yes, it is very well for you to cheer me, but although I was prepared to open the ports, I was not prepared to shut them again" (hear, hear). Well, now, it seems from that, the difficulty of the Right Hon. Gentleman was not as to opening the ports; that, under the circumstances, he would have had no difficulty about. But at the bottom of his policy the Right Hon. Baronet has resolved that the present system of corn and provision laws should cease (hear, hear). Compare these facts with the declaration that has been made by a Member of the Cabinet, not exactly on the hustings, but before a large body of his constituents in a midland county—the extraordinary declaration, which I dare say attracted the attention of many, made by the Chief Secretary for Ireland. He tells us,—“We had wished that this communication should have been made to another Parliament,” that is to say, the present Parliament might have gone on, there might have been a renewal, a seven years' lease of a Conservative majority, and when the election had taken place, and we had just met, we should have received the announcement which, by peculiar circumstances, has been made too soon (cheers and laughter). Now I am making no charge; I am throwing out hints to the Protective Members of the Cabinet who probably may rise in the course of this debate (a laugh). These are the points on which we wish to have information. We want to know whether it was a foregone conclusion, and whether the Secretary for Ireland was authorized in saying that it was not intended to propose these changes until a new Parliament had assembled. We want to know whether it is a fact that, although the Right Hon. Gentleman has more than once said he deplors the task has fallen to him, and wished it had fallen to others, the Right Hon. Gentleman, before the idea could have been perceived by any human being, had proposed these measures in Council, and insisted on their adoption? These are two circumstances that require elucidation (hear). When the Right Hon. Gentleman at first brought these measures before the House, he seemed to found them on the observation of the last three years; but in the last speech he made he found fault with that expression, and the position he then laid down was this:—“I don't say that it was the experience of the last three years that induced me to adopt the measures I now recommend; but, taking a general view of the commercial history of this country for a long period, I had seen, with gradual and sometimes considerable relaxations of protective duties, and especially during the last three years, under the influence of my tariff, a great simultaneous increase of exports and imports.” I believe that is a fair statement of what the Right Hon. Gentleman said. Now, it is very agreeable to hear of a great increase of exports and imports;

and if the Right Hon. Gentleman had been opening his annual budget, proposing the renewal of an income-tax, I would not have been captious. But when a great social revolution is proposed and recommended to us, and the data offered in exports and imports, it becomes the House to be very cautious in their conduct, and analyze very severely the operation of those data. Now, Sir, there is one cause, with which I dare say the House, and particularly Hon. Members opposite, are very familiar, but which has never been mentioned in this debate, which operates extremely, and has especially operated upon, the exports and imports of this year. I am throwing overboard the magnificent railroads, and all those features of nature and of art which the Right Hon. Baronet never referred to on the first occasion; I am not taking advantage of these omissions; I believe it is universally acknowledged by all persons, whatever opinion they may have upon the great question, that the basis of the Right Hon. Gentleman's argument was much too limited at first, and the data on which he built it utterly fallacious (hear, hear). I throw out of consideration all these circumstances, and I put my finger upon an important agency in this question, to which I call the attention of the House:—there is nothing that affects imports especially so much as the state of the seasons of the country (hear, hear). Now, I will show you a case, as a commercial transaction, both as regards the imports and exports. If you look at the exports and imports this year, you will find a very great increase in both in the instance of sugar. It is impossible to suppose that the tariff, the operation in the sugar duties by the Right Hon. Gentleman, could have caused the cargoes of sugar that we received, particularly in the more distant parts, from the Mauritius, for instance, and from Indian plantations; but if we received a very great increase of import, there was an abundant crop in the Mauritius, and throughout India. We received from those parts of the world imports which figure in tables as a very great increase; I believe the Right Hon. Baronet will not deny that. Now, it is a most curious circumstance that while there has been that abundant crop in the Mauritius and the East Indies, there was a total deficiency of the crop at the Havannah. Trace, then, the influence of the seasons of the year. All the great Russian refineries are entirely supplied by the Havannah; and what occurs? Why, Russia imports sugar from England; and thus you see, at the same time, the influence of a good season immensely increases the import from the Mauritius and India into this country, and the influence of a bad season in the Havannah produces a great increase in the export of sugar from England to Russia (hear, hear). No one will pretend that that is the consequence of the tariff (hear, hear). Now, I say that the influence of the seasons ought to be traced in all the exports of the great raw commodities of colonial and commercial transactions (some confusion). I know this subject is dry and unpalatable to the House, but I feel myself bound to enter into it (hear, hear); and though we are a fallen party, I trust the House can be generous (cheers). I want to show the influence of the seasons upon exports and imports. Suppose, for example, you had a very bad cotton crop in the United States, a crop as deficient as one I remember, to the extent of a

half of million of bales ; do you mean to say that putting an end to the paltry duty you had upon cotton wool would have led to the great increase in the import this year ? (hear, hear). An exuberant crop has produced an immense import (hear, hear). If you will look into the wool trade, you will find an immense increase ; and you may see an illustration of the principle in coffee, or sugar, or wool, or cotton, those four great staple articles of import (hear, hear). Now, at the risk of wearying the House, I must venture to notice another statement of the Right Hon. Gentleman, one of those that he sometimes makes with his figures all ready, and with that felicitous manner that seems to augur a favourable result (a laugh). The Right Hon. Gentleman has made a battle-horse of the unfortunate silk trade. I really should have thought, that the memory of the hand-loom weavers alone would have prevented a Minister, although the most ardent votary of Free Trade, from putting forward the case of the silk trade (hear). My Hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire has referred to that trade, and, without now alluding to details with which the House is familiar, and without going into statements respecting that species of waste which has a name which I cannot at this moment recall—giving the Right Hon. Gentleman the advantage of all that, which as compared with raw silk, ranging from 14s. to 25s. a-pound, may be purchased at from 2d. to 10d. I beg the Right Hon. Gentleman to contrast the import of raw silk of 1844, with all those additions, with the last year of a protected trade; if my memory serves me aright, we imported 4,100,064lbs. of raw silk ; that is exactly twenty-two years ago ; and in 1844, after twenty years of the blessings of this relaxed protection, we imported 4,020,063lbs ; and yet it appeared from the statement of the Right Hon. Baronet, unless he is misreported, that the contrast he drew was between 2,000,000lbs. under protection, and an import of 6,000,000lbs. under a relaxed system (hear, hear). But suppose the increase had been such as the Right Hon. Gentleman stated ; I cannot believe for a moment that you are to trace all the progress in a country like England, with the untiring energies of the English nation, to the principle that regulates your commercial code. I know, that if the country is prosperous, we are ready to say that we reap the advantage of the tariff ; if the country is prosperous, Hon. Gentlemen are ready to say that the approximation we have made to liberal commerce has benefited the country ; I believe, whether we had one system or the other, the country would have prospered (cheers). The country will flourish though there may be much class suffering and much individual misery—the two things we wish to prevent (hear). But the extraordinary circumstance connected with the silk trade is, that it has not thrived ; it is the exception, that is to prove the rule (laughter and some murmurs). If Hon. Gentlemen doubt my statement, they will have ample opportunities to contradict me ; I do not speak from personal knowledge certainly, but I speak on the authority of persons well acquainted with the fact. It is not very material, however, (a laugh) and I will give you a good reason why (hear, hear). I made this observation, because I thought it deserving of the attention of the House, and I referred especially to the effect of the seasons upon imports ; but I

am perfectly willing to admit the principle, which the Right Hon. Baronet has established in his last speech. Now, what is this principle? The Right Hon. Baronet says, that we have been terminating prohibition, and relaxing protection, and the country has been more flourishing than ever. Now, that is my case. I say the country is flourishing because you have given it a just, a judicious, and a moderate protection (cheers). But the Right Hon. Gentleman having proved, especially in his last exposition of the policy of Government, that by a just, judicious, and moderate protection England has flourished, turns round very calmly to us, and says—"I am bound to acknowledge that I have changed my opinion upon this subject of protection; I am no longer in favour of it." His whole speech, after all, only proved the advantage of it. It can prove nothing else, but the advantage of the principle of a moderate protection ("oh, oh"). I am sorry to have excited that groan from a Free Trader in distress (a laugh). I want to ask the Right Honourable Gentleman a calm, I think a perfectly Parliamentary, and a very important question—does he believe that he can fight hostile tariffs with free imports? That is the point ("hear, hear," from the League bench). "Hear, hear," from the disciples of the school of Manchester! A most consistent cheer! They have always maintained they can; and if their principles are right, as they believe they are—as I believe they are not—I can easily understand, that their premises being assumed, they arrive at that conclusion. They may be right; they believe they can fight hostile tariffs with free imports, and they tell us very justly, "Let us take care of our imports, and every thing else will take care of itself." But is that the conviction of the Right Hon. Gentleman? We want to know that; because, if that be his conviction, why all these elegies over defunct diplomatic negotiations with respect to commercial treaties? (laughter). Why does the Right Honourable Gentleman speak with so much pity and with so much pique (a laugh) upon the question of his diplomatic intercourse on the subject of relaxed commerce? If he believes that we can meet hostile tariffs with free imports, he need not trouble himself about commercial treaties (hear, hear). But if the Right Hon. Gentleman does not believe that, if he has not the conviction of the school of Manchester (a laugh), then he is not justified in offering this measure (hear, hear). But how can I believe that the Right Honourable Gentleman has this conviction, when he has never enunciated, when he tells you, as one of the recommendations of this measure, that he hopes great things from a good example? If he believes in that great principle which I have just stated, a good example is of no effect whatever (cheers). We must have a Protection Minister speak upon this subject (a laugh). We must have a clear declaration from the Cabinet upon this important point; it is the question upon which all hinges. I conclude from the language of the Right Honourable Gentleman, that he is not satisfied of that, how otherwise am I to explain his language? He tells you that Prussia already shakes; he reads to you the report of an American Minister in favour of what is really Free Trade—an equal interchange of the peculiar products of countries (hear); he describes what I must consider

most extraordinary opinions upon the subject in France, and to which my Noble Friend the Member for Newark has very properly referred (hear, hear). I cannot presume to offer an opinion upon these high subjects of Cabinet secrets, after such declarations from the Right Hon. Gentleman. It may be because all things are possible—that the Americans are going to change their tariff—that Russia has shaken already—that the French are votaries of Free Trade ; but I think it my duty, with permission of the House, to offer them some facts, from which I leave them to draw their own conclusion (hear, hear). In the first place, we have had the report of Mr. Walker. Mr. Walker is a very respectable man ; I believe—I am so informed on respectable authority—that Mr. Walker is not interested in the protection of native industry, and I am sorry to say that in America, for the last few years, the question what your material interest is, is almost the only line of demarcation between parties (hear, hear). But before you calculate upon any modification in the tariff of America, it is just as well that the House should clearly understand what is the power of the manufacturing interest, the protected interest in America (hear, hear). I will not refer to that enormous volume, which has already been the subject of criticism ; but an American gentleman, residing at Liverpool, has sent me the last census of the American population. It was taken in 1840, and I believe it is the last ; if there be a later one, it would be rather more in my favour. Now, what do you suppose is the number of manufacturing operatives in the United States ? In 1840, and since 1840, under this tariff, there has been the greatest development of manufacturing industry yet known in America (hear, hear)—in 1840, the number of the manufacturing operatives in the United States was 800,000—a population exceeding, I believe, the manufacturing population of our four great staple manufactures in England (hear, hear). The Hon. Gentleman, who is the Secretary of the Treasury there, says in his report that the only interests concerned are the interests of 10,000 manufacturers. Now, the importance of an interest is to be calculated from the amount of the population employed and of the capital invested. The number of the manufacturers may be of very trifling importance, but there are 10,000 manufacturers in the United States, and I want to know, how many there are in England. I know, if you look to the population returns, which were drawn up by a pen not favourable to the agricultural interest (hear), the number of manufacturers does not appear ; probably it was not convenient to allow it (hear, hear) ; but I very much doubt whether there are 10,000 (hear, hear). At any rate, see the importance of the interests you have to encounter. But that is not all. I am not going to dilate upon the number of individuals in America who are dependent upon these 800,000 operatives. But there is an agricultural state in the vicinity of these manufacturing establishments that is not in favour of protection ; and for this reason—because protection gives them the benefit of the home market (hear). Now, you have had to encounter the best organised, and, probably, the most numerous influences in the United States ; and unless you are aware of the special circumstances in respect to the industry of the United States, it is impossible to comprehend what is going on in that

country. I will give an illustration of this. The other day I met a Noble Lord who was once a Minister of the Crown, and who was a most accomplished man, who said, with an expression of surprise —“Here is the venerable Adams, who has made a furious war speech !” The Noble Lord was astonished at this ; but ever since all the manufacturing establishments in America had become warlike. They had found that war—and I am quoting the language of a most respectable literary organ of the party, which I only read last night, that after all, war will be the only protection for the manufacturer (hear). Now, let me press the House to remember the arguments which have been employed in favour of reducing the tariff for the American markets. It has always been considered a peace-maker, the proper way was to establish prosperous commercial relations with that country. But remember that in exact proportion as you conciliate the western community, you will lose the affections of the great northern states, who are the most powerful part of the American community. I put this to the consideration of the Noble Lord who so recently visited that country, and who so much interested us the other night with an account of it—I mean the Noble Lord the Member of the West Riding of Yorkshire—who, I may here say, I rejoice to see returned to us, though it be as the Member for the West Riding (hear). I read his speech with great interest, for really there was so much detail respecting American life, and such pictures of landscapes (laughter); all I wished was, that he would have entered a little more into certain details, and given us an example of that celebrated transatlantic melody which depicts a gentleman jumping from one side of the table to the other (laughter). I have endeavoured to condense my observations on this subject, but I cannot say a word when I am told—most oracularly told—that Prussia already shakes. I find myself not able to say a single word of my own. I can only say that I read a book, just published, within this month, where there is no indication of all this wonderful change. It is written by a man who, on the contrary, evidences the most obstinate determination on the part of Prussia that this system must be put an end to immediately. With respect to the Manchester people, he says that they can export at a loss, and he quotes the language of Mr. Barnes, and a speech of the Hon. Member for Durham. He says they can go on exporting at a loss, and thus they will swamp our markets, so that these dangerous measures of the English Government render it necessary, we should make our tariff, if possible, more stringent (hear, hear). But we require a more detailed account of the shaking of Prussia (laughter); and till we receive it, I, for one, shall be extremely sceptical. But I have read a most mournful representation from the little state of Mecklenburgh; they say they have been asked to join the Zollverein over and over again; but they have not joined it in consequence of the remonstrances of the English Minister, to their great injury; and they say, after all the sacrifices we have made, if the Zollverein have free importation to England, we have no advantage whatever, and the best thing we can do is to join the Zollverein, and see what measures are best calculated to advance the cause of Mecklenburgh” (hear, hear). Now I come to France, and I must say, that I never in my life listened to anything

with more astonishment than to the prospects which the Right Hon. Gentleman held out as to France (hear, hear). Remember these are prospects held out by the Minister, not by gentlemen of the Manchester school, who believe that we may fight hostile tariffs with free imports (hear, hear). He holds out these prospects; but I say without shrinking, and I say solemnly, what is my firm conviction, and I speak with perhaps as much knowledge of the men of France as any in this House,—that with the exception of an occasional Minister, who attempts to please and conciliate an English Minister, I do not believe there is an interest in France that is not in favour of a high restrictive policy (hear, hear). It is a most ruinous circumstance for France, which the House should bear in mind, and my Hon. Friend the Member for Newark has alluded to it, that there is no country in the world where parties are so fierce, so violent, as in France. They do not there listen merely to changes of Government; there are parties there ever looking to revolutions, and in their common talk pointing to changes that make an Englishman shudder. Yet you find this curious circumstance, that not only what is called the conservative party, that which sways the Chambers—the commercial aristocracy of feudality—and of course interested in all the great protected interests—but the ultra-republican party, the great object of whose struggles is not merely to get rid of a Sovereign or a Minister, but entirely to change the tenure of property. If possible that party is more opposed to what you call Free Trade even than the commercial community (hear, hear). You have in France the two great interests—the political and the philosophical—and you have also the commercial, all working together against what they call the fatal principle of competition (hear, hear). There is but one way of ever gaining any relaxation of the mercantile system of France, and that is by diplomacy. The French Cabinet will do nothing without a treaty (hear). I bring it to this point, that if the Right Hon. Baronet is not prepared to meet hostile tariffs with free imports, but if he has any lingering idea that in this matter he will be assisted by France, he has no ground to stand upon. And now let us try the hostile tariffs against the free imports. I will suppose that we have a great increase of importation from the Baltic—that, in addition to the commerce we have already with those shores, they import a great deal more. Supposing you import 5,000,000 more from Russia than you ever did before, how will you do if they take no additional goods from you than they do now? I know Hon. Gentlemen opposite will say they manage these things in commerce by means of bills, and so on; but that will not improve the case. When you have got the 5,000,000 additional from Russia, you will buy bills from Brazil or New York to the amount of those 5,000,000, and you will thus, you say, carry out your transaction. But you have already supplied the Brazilians and Americans with as much of your goods as they will take, and if you want to sell still more to them, you must do so at a great sacrifice (hear). Supposing you send out a million and a-half of goods, and they only require one million, then it is clear you must sell the other half million at an immense sacrifice. Then you must discharge workmen and reduce wages, and misery pervades the country (hear, hear).

The system of the Government, it appears, however, is a comprehensive system ; but are you prepared to meet the effect it will have on the general distribution of the precious metals ? You reduce your wages—if prices are lower, as they are to be lowered in this country—if you find that you can no longer maintain the high wages and efficient labour of the country. I want to know how you can command, under such a system the distribution of the precious metals ? (hear). I confess I cannot find, in the banking bill of the Right Hon. Baronet, any support for this doctrine. But let me ask how you are to meet your taxation,—how are you to meet the fixed burdens of the country, if you bring on a general fall of prices in the labour of England by this system of forcingsales ? But suppose you send out only £1,000,000 instead of £1,500,000 worth of goods, the effect will be much the same. Every year the labour of England will receive less and less, and the inevitable effect will be, that you will have less command of foreign articles. And how will you fulfil your public contracts under this system ? Now, unless the Right Hon. Baronet is prepared to fight hostile tariffs with free imports, I repeat that he is not justified in bringing forward this measure (hear, hear). And now, Sir, before addressing myself to the principle of protection, I feel myself bound in courtesy to notice the speeches of two Right Hon. Gentlemen who addressed the House during the debate. The first is the speech of the Right Hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War, and I must say, I think it was a speech which displayed a great deal of spirit. It was—I do not use the term offensively—a League speech—a speech which if made at the right time, and by a proper person, and under proper circumstances, might have been received with much applause. I can easily understand how Hon. Members, who are sitting opposite to me at this moment, who entered life with a deep conviction of the truth of a great economical principle, who have traced, though in an exaggerated spirit, the many evils which, according to their view have flowed from the atrocious system to which they are opposed. I can conceive how, acting under the deep convictions which I believe animates many Gentlemen of the Anti-Corn Law League—I can easily conceive them using language of a very ardent kind. But I must say that the Right Hon. Gentleman, the Secretary at War, was not the person to address this House as a martyr when he is only a convert (loud cries of “hear, hear”). I was going to say a recent convert—forgetting that, in 1841, he was in favour of the principles of Free Trade ; he only objected to the mode in which the principles were applied from the other side of the table (laughter). That Right Honourable Gentleman in his speech, the other night, congratulated the House upon the fact that the fallacy of cheap bread was discarded by all parties—whereas the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in his address on the following night, in answer to an appeal from the Noble Lord the Member for Stamford, stated, that unless the question before the House involved the supply of a greater quantity of food to the people, there was no question before them (hear, hear). How does the Secretary of State for the Home Department reconcile that with the speech of the Secretary at War ? I was not surprised that there should be distraction in their councils when there is such

discordance in their speeches (hear, hear). The Secretary at War also, as respects a most important interest in this comprehensive scheme, which I do not wish more particularly to advert to, except to say that it is, in my opinion, a most important interest, the Right Hon. Gentleman asks, what do you fear from free imports? Where are they to come from? Now, I want to avoid making a Corn Law speech—I shall have other opportunities of doing so; but at the same time, when an observation of this kind is made, I cannot allow it to pass, for I observe that there is a coolness of assertion very prevalent on this subject (hear, hear). I read a speech to day, from one whom we all respect, and who, I believe, we may now call a noble Parliamentary victim (laughter). Addressing the electors, he said,—What need you care about imports. Suppose there is an importation of 1,000,000 quarters, there will be a rise of 10s. in the price.” Now, I beg to say that I have investigated the subject as much as I could, and that I have some personal experience of the corn-growing countries; and I have not the slightest doubt that when this system shall be established, you can get any quantity of corn from those countries that you like (hear, hear). It is ridiculous to tell us that they have no capital. The gentlemen at Manchester have plenty (hear, hear). The Member for Sunderland will soon give them some (laughter). I will say, also, that there is no fallacy so great as to suppose that prices will rise as soon as there is an established market here, in proportion to the demand. This may be true in cases of an uncertain supply; but the moment you have a settled market, in exact proportion to the demand prices will fall (expressions of dissent). This is the inevitable rule (cries of “no, no”). I am prepared to support my assertion with reasons, if the House will allow me. Take the article of tea for example. The demand for tea has increased year after year, and year after year prices have fallen (cheers). Take the article of cotton as another example, for there is a great analogy between cotton and corn. I remember when there was the same discussion in America respecting the supply of cotton as we have respecting corn, and it was maintained in a pamphlet by a member of Congress that, under no circumstances, could the price of cotton be less than twelve cents per pound. Well, now the fact has turned out that ever since a regular trade in cotton was established, with scarcely an interval, the price of cotton has diminished, and diminished, and diminished, till it has fallen as low as three cents per pound. (hear, hear). You may reject my reasoning as regards corn; but until you refute my examples respecting tea and cotton you have no right to do so (hear). Well, now to return to the speech of the Right Hon. the Secretary at War—he asks us, what is the use of all this agitation about a mere question of the repeal of a duty on one article of import? Forgetting that it is a little short of a revolution that is proposed (hear, hear). And then follows the consistent Secretary of State for the Home Department, and he tells us, that if we refuse to pass this measure we shall bring upon England anarchy, misery, and ruin (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, was, it appears, very much alarmed at the end of last year in consequence of a deficiency of potatoes in

Ireland. He told us so; he told us that he was also alarmed in consequence of an expected deficiency in the wheat harvest of England; and he also told us that he was particularly alarmed because it might possibly bring about a state of affairs such as we had in 1842, by which he assured us he was much more alarmed than was imagined at the time. Now I have observed that ever since the Right Hon. Baronet has been a Minister of a Conservative Cabinet, he has annually brought forward a very extensive measure, which has as regularly produced great alarm and excited great odium in the country; and that the Right Honourable Gentleman, alarmed at his own proceedings, has ended by withdrawing the measure (cheers and laughter). Seeing that, in opposition, he was not very scrupulous, it seems somewhat extraordinary that the responsibilities of office should bring to him not prudence but panic (renewed cheers and laughter). And these are the Ministers who turn round and say, "You are alarmed at our measure, but you do not suffer at all except from your own panic." Why, they are the children of panic, they are an alarmist Cabinet (loud cheers). I know not from what cause, but fright is stamped on their very forehead—whether it arises from a deficiency of food in Ireland, or a superabundance of suffrages in Lancashire (laughter and applause). And now if the House will permit me, I will meet the question of Protection. I have not deviated from my engagement. I was bound to answer the main arguments that were offered by the Government in favour of their new system, and now I shall offer a few remarks in favour of Protection. Sir, the Noble Lord, the Member for London, in his address the other night, the tone of which I am sure every one felt was alike equal to the occasion, and to himself, touched on the question of Protection in the abstract. He expressed in very classic language the usual economical theories on the subject—very valuable, no doubt, in themselves, and very accurate, but theories which never influenced human conduct, and are incapable of ever doing so (hear, hear). Therefore all we could admire in the address of the Noble Lord was the evidence it afforded of his well regulated mind ("hear," and a laugh.) Now, Sir, I don't know what the Government opposite mean, dealing as we are with England, and with practically existing circumstances, I don't know what they mean by the protective system of this country. I don't find that in England the protection system is what he desired it to be—protective to every branch of native industry. I don't find that such a system as that ever existed. There was, Sir, once in England a commercial system, sound in its principles, definite in its details, and beneficial in practice—I mean the colonial system. No doubt there was protection to native industry, but it was always auxiliary to the colonial system (hear). I am not, I assure the House, referring to these points as matters of historical curiosity, but in order to see whether it is not possible that we might come to some agreement as to what the principle of protection is. Now we always had in England in those good old days of which a Noble Friend of mine has spoken, a very liberal system of commerce in cotton. There were propositions made at Utrecht, which were not carried into effect, for a general system of commer-

cial communication at a nominal duty—at 10 per cent. That was really the principle of Free Trade. In the middle of the 18th century all our foreign trade was sacrificed to the upholding of our colonial system. There is no doubt, whatever, that the range of our transactions in commerce was curtailed, but the merchants of England were compensated by more secure markets and larger profits. But at length your colonial system deserted you. You lost your principal colonies, and then you had to lay down a new principle. It fell to the lot of Mr. Pitt to do that. His speeches, which you all have read, are a development of the real principles of Free Trade (hear). A large system of commercial intercourse on the principle of reciprocal advantage. He told Gentlemen in the House, “You must not adhere, as you have done, to your old ideas, as derived from the colonial system. We no longer possess the colonies we had. You must come forward—(he was speaking to the country gentlemen, who seemed, even then, to be thought the most obstinate of men)—and give up your colonial system.” What did Mr. Pitt do? He gave a new tariff, as the Right Hon. Gentleman did. He came down to this House saying, “Here is my new tariff; these are the terms of intercourse with all Europe on the best principles of Free Trade. I have entered into commercial treaties with some Powers, and I have begun with France.” Then came your revolutionary war, which upset all this system. But the moment it was over you returned again to the principles then laid down. Mr. Huskisson and Lord Liverpool pursued the same system, and at last we again find it laid down by the Right Hon. Baronet (hear). For myself, I gave a most conscientious vote for the tariff of the Right Hon. Baronet, as embodying a system of modified, just, and judicious protection (hear), and which was in complete harmony with what I think are the true commercial principles of this country. We are not without examples. There is a country in which for a long term there has been a fair application of the principles of Free Trade—not because there was any philosophical application of them, but because the country was inhabited by a haughty race who despised commerce. There has been Free Trade in Turkey for a long time, and what had it produced? It had destroyed the spirit of competition and the finest manufactures in the world. As late as 1812 these manufactures had existed; but they have been destroyed. Now, that was the consequence in Turkey, and its efforts have been as pernicious as the effect of the contrary principle in Spain. You have had the same impossibility of aggregating capital—the same impoverishment of the people. And one of the great causes of the financial difficulties of the Porte has been, that the effects of unbridled competition have been as bad as those of too much protection. When a great Minister has to deal with the general arrangements of the commercial affairs of a country, he has two questions to look to—first, how to employ the people; and, secondly, that there should be varied means of employment, so as not to give too great a preponderance to any one branch, for then there will be great distress (hear). The Right Hon. Baronet said that there was a very great difficulty in arguing against the principles of Free Trade, because they had a *primâ facie* case in their favour. Sir, I never care

much about *primâ facie* cases. It would be just as easy for me to say that there was a *primâ facie* case for Protection, as for the Right Hon. Baronet to say that there was one in favour of Free Trade (hear, hear). For to protect the industry of our fellow-subjects is certainly *primâ facie* necessary (hear). Now, Sir, the Right Hon. Baronet has announced, officially announced, that the principle of Protection is for ever relinquished by his Cabinet. We, speaking for ourselves, think that principle a beneficial one. Mind, I don't say I can prove it to be so, but only that we think it beneficial. We call on you to prove the contrary. The *onus probandi* lies on you. Now it is on that ground I will meet the gentlemen of the Anti-Corn Law League. I heard the able speech of the Hon. Member for Manchester; I lost the speech of the Hon. Member for Durham owing to peculiar circumstances; indeed, I ought not to have lost the speech of one so prominent in the debate as he (hear). I have considered those two speeches, however, and I cannot extract from either of them a single principle which can guide me in this maze, or a single reasonable objection to the principle of Protection. I admit, however, that as those Hon. Gentlemen have made so many other speeches, it is not fair in me thus to single out an isolated one. Now, I declare that I wish to meet their case in the fairest manner possible. I confess I have great difficulty in doing so, because I find that the use of the League has perpetually changed. It is a very curious fact, that although they have been working now for seven years, they commenced by promising cheap bread to the labourer, and have ended by promising high rents to the landlord (cheers and laughter). But I am not stating this as a charge against the League. I can understand that if I were engaged in working out a great principle, and put it in every possible light, I should constantly see contrary effects produced (hear), and I really believe that the League all this time, when we thought they were instructing the people, have been only educating themselves (laughter). And I will tell the gentlemen of the League another reason why I am able to trace the ingenuous development of their mind. I have seen a printed circular, a sort of manifesto of the Chamber of Commerce at Manchester, issued in 1839, which gives a most melancholy account of the commercial condition of England at that time. I examined that document, and I found that the panacea proposed for all these evils was a change, not in the Corn Laws, but in the currency (cheers and laughter). Now it so happens that the gentlemen who drew up that circular are the principal men of the League. If you doubt it, look up stairs, and you will see in a book which contains the evidence before your committee on joint-stock banks in 1840 or 1841—I forget the year—some of the most distinguished members of the League—some of them holding seats in this House—and you will find that they then had not an idea about Repeal of the Corn Laws, but that they were the sworn friends of the Member for Birmingham (a laugh, and a cry of “No” from Mr. Muntz). No! Do you mean to say that Mr. Richard Cobden, the Member for Stockport, did not give evidence before that committee? At least the name of a Mr. Richard Cobden appears in the list of witnesses examined before that committee (hear).

MR. MUNTZ.—I do not mean to say that he never did, but that I never did (hear).

MR. D'ISRAELI.—I always thought he was one of the school of the Gemini (laughter), but I find I am mistaken. It seems, however, that the League have been well considering all these questions. See how they have exhausted them. They exhausted the currency, and then they turned round on the landlords. Perhaps the next persons they will go against will be the fundholders (hear, hear). Perhaps, after all, we (the Protectionists) are only a link in the great chain against which they are prepared to proceed (loud cheers and laughter). But now I am going to state the case of the League against the Protectionists; and I take it from the speeches delivered by members of that body:—"Protection," they say, "aims at two objects—to feed the people and to employ the people. It has failed. It does not feed the people, because we are obliged to import corn. It does not employ the people, because we are obliged to send them to other countries that they may earn their bread. Therefore, Protection is a failure. Now, we say we can feed the people and employ the people" (cheers). I may answer that there are two great assumptions in this statement. Your reply to us is, that we have failed; but you are untried. These are ancillary arguments; but can you deny that such is your argument? No. Well, silence is consent. Why have we failed in feeding the people? We have no agricultural statistics, but we have what are called great facts to guide us. We know that fifty years ago the population of the country was not half of what it is at present (cheers). We know that at that time we could not feed our people, that we imported as much as one-fifth part of the corn consumed. We know that now, in average years, we succeed in feeding the people though their numbers are double what they then were. That is a *prima facie* case in our favour (cheers). It is said Protection is the bane of agriculture. I don't see how Protection can be the bane of agriculture, unless you mean to assert or prove that the agriculture of England is inferior to that of any other country. Now, I want to know where are superior systems of agriculture to be found (loud cheers). You will not tell me that there is a superior system of agriculture in Russia. The agriculture of that country has been described by a very graceful and graphic writer, and the passage must be so fresh in the recollection of the House that I shall not repeat it now; but the agriculture of Russia remains much in the same state. Then you say the agriculture of Germany is superior. I admit you may go over the world and take a small district, it may be in Flanders, or Tuscany, or Styria, in the south of Germany, and you may tell us we cannot produce anything like that in England. That I doubt. There are districts which can produce crops equal to any produced abroad. But what we have to say is, that there is no country with such a breadth of land under food cultivation as to support great masses of people—that is the point—which can compare with England. You won't say the north of Germany. Take a rural town there with its one shop, perhaps that of an apothecary, who sells not only drugs, but everything else (laughter). Compare that rural town in the north of Germany with the rural towns of England

—(loud cheers)—the smallest rural towns of England, with their many great shops, their six or seven large establishments abounding in Manchester goods. There you understand what is the home market (loud cheers). Now, I take a country very near this, the country of our rival and friend, France. It has great advantages in an agricultural point of view—an exuberant soil, a fertile climate. It has none of the disadvantages which militate, or are said to militate against this country. There is no primogeniture, no hereditary peerage, no entail, and no game laws (laughter and cheers). I ask is the agriculture of France in any measure to be compared with that of England? Now, it seems that under the system of Protection, the agriculture of England is not so very bad. Though the population has doubled within fifty years, it has contrived to feed the people at a lower rate. But you say there is no application of capital to the land in this country. I deplore the want of agricultural statistics. We must make researches, and from a number of facts deduce our inference. It is totally impossible to travel over England without being convinced that there is a greater application of capital to land in this country than in any other. It is totally impossible that the fact should be otherwise. There is not a man working in any quarter of the globe—there is not a man resident at the court of a foreign prince, the great object of whose ambition is not that he shall return to England, purchase land, and become a justice of the peace, or deputy-lieutenant (laughter and cheers). Riding on elephants, surrounded by slaves, he is always dreaming of quarter-sessions (renewed laughter and cheers). The land of England is not only supported by the capitalist of England, but it is the land of that country which is the metropolis of the world. It receives the tribute of the world (cheers). You say there is no application of capital to the land of England. Why there were inquiries made, and statements, duly authenticated, are on record, which show that the imports of guano during the last two years amount, in value, to a million or a million and a quarter (cheers). No doubt if you give a mercantile profit, you have a more organized application. But the peculiarity is, that here, where wealth is so predominant, land gives no more than three per cent. of a return. I have often been asked what was the reason why, when so many markets were open for the employment of capital, people should invest their capital in land. It is what no foreigner can understand. It is your territorial constitution (loud cheers) that has invested the possession of land with an honour peculiar to itself, and given to the landowner a position which is superior to that of any other class (cheers). There are two circumstances which I affirm as grounds of argument in the question now before the House. The first is, that the Corn Laws which are to be repealed have kept the country independent of other nations for its supplies of grain; and I assume the other circumstance, that after a certain number of years we shall be involved in foreign war. Now, I want Hon. Gentlemen to consider the position of England at the time of the rupture of the treaty of Amiens, which was exactly what I am assuming may occur. At the time of the rupture of the treaty of Amiens we had a virtual Free Trade; we had received large supplies of corn from the continent

when we were about to embark in that war. What was the consequence? You tell me, what does it signify whether we were independent or not of a foreign supply—we could obtain a supply from France in time of war. I believe in 1812 we did receive some corn from Holland and France. But if you base your theory upon that isolated fact, you not only fall into error, but misapprehend the real circumstances. You were prevented by that war from having supplies from the continent; and it was only by gradually obtaining the dominion of the seas that you were able to obtain any. But was that all? From the absolute want of corn, England at the time offered the greatest possible inducement to investments in land. You had then all those thousands of enclosure acts of which we have so often heard. You had that enormous rise of prices when wheat was 110s. the quarter; you raised loans, and you paid interest on them with wheat at 25s. Such were the consequences of that unnatural excitement, and that subsequent depression which arose from your having neglected to secure a sufficient, or nearly sufficient, home supply of corn (cheers). Now, I want to know whether it can be said, under all these circumstances, remembering the state of England at the rupture of the treaty of Amiens—remembering at the commencement of that terrific struggle that the country did receive a supply from abroad—remembering that the importation of grain from foreign countries during that struggle never occurred till by the efforts of a bold and patriotic spirit we had gained the dominion of the seas—remembering there were two periods when absolute famine was impending over England, the quartern loaf in 1812 selling at 1s. 11d.—remembering all these circumstances, which ought to warn us against being dependent on foreign supply (cheers), and seeing that still, with all our immense increase of population, England has succeeded in mainly supporting herself, I think it cannot be urged against the system of Protection that it is the “bane of agriculture.” And now I will meet the Gentlemen of the League on the second point of their allegation. You say this system has failed to employ the population (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War has touched upon this delicate subject. He said, only cultivate the hills of Wiltshire, and there will be sufficient employment for the whole population (hear, hear); I ask the Right Hon. Gentleman why the hills of Wiltshire are not cultivated? (cheers). It is a legitimate question to ask of one whose proud boast it is that he is the representative of that county; still more is it a legitimate question to ask of one descended from an illustrious family that has been long planted in its soil; on him and his, among others, rests the responsibility of the want of cultivation in that county (cheers). You tell me of the wretched peasantry of Goatacre and Bremhill, you tell me of their miserable and forlorn condition; it is not here alone that I have attempted, however weakly, to call attention to the condition of the people of this country; but when you come here with your cool assumptions and daring charges, when you say—“Look at the condition of the peasantry, and see what protection has done for them,” why, I call on you for facts and dates (cheers). I ask you what was the condition of the peasantry of England before the influence of this system of protec-

tion? (cheers). I say, that, even with this accumulated mass of population, it was worse then than at present (cheers). I have read details of the condition of the peasantry of England, especially in the western counties, during the last years of the revolutionary war, when we had a free importation of corn from France and Holland; I have seen descriptions of their state at that time, and in nothing was it less miserable than their present condition, except that there was then a wild and indiscriminate assistance given by irresponsible persons in the name of poor-rate, which only assisting the wild and reckless, lessened the responsibility of the proprietors of the land (hear, hear). You bring forward your Goatacre meetings! The Right Hon. Baronet compared an Hon. Member on this side of the House to Anacharsis Cloots (laughter). Well, I remember having read a story of this worthy, who has been quoted by the Right Hon. Gentleman, very germane to this subject. Anacharsis one day announced to the National Convention that there was a deputation from all the nations of Europe, who wished to appear before it, to express the gratitude of a liberated people, and to pay homage to those whose visions of philanthropy were about to be fulfilled. The French Convention deeply impressed with a sense of what was owing to its position, allowed the deputation from all the nations of Europe to appear; it entered, introduced by Anacharsis, all in appropriate costume (cheers and laughter), the representative of each nation in the peculiar dress of the country. It produced a great sensation—(laughter)—it was talked of throughout Paris, and announced to all Europe as a wonderful event—(laughter)—it was announced as a proof that the failure of the great social revolution had become impossible. But after the deputation had been received, it appeared that they all dined together at the Café de Paris, and afterwards danced at a carnival ball in the same dresses in which they had appeared at the Convention! (great laughter). Perhaps the Goatacre meeting comes from a similar manufactory. But it is not by alluding to these stale arts of faction that I wish to call your attention away from this question. Let the condition of the peasantry of England, especially in the western counties, be as miserable as you say it is—point them out as living in wretched hovels, not properly fed, not clothed—let me admit all this—but, when you turn round and say,—“See, this is what agricultural protection has produced,” why could I not go to some of those Protection meetings—where I have never been—and say with equal truth, “Enter with me the manufactories of Stockport or Manchester (cheers) and I will show you human suffering and human degradation; I will bring you to hovels where the exhausted slave curses the life that he cannot quit” (cheers). Can I do this—could I do this? No; because I am too well acquainted with the noble industry of those great counties to condescend to such representations (loud cheers). I could put my hand upon the factory where the people are as ill treated as the people whose wretchedness you talk of; but I know the industry of Lancashire is as noble as well as a well-ordered industry—I know great cotton manufacturers who are deeply sensible of their responsibility for the condition of their people, and I could not honestly condescend to practise such vile arts of faction (loud cheers). Now

we find the people are employed, though not so well employed as we could wish ; we find their condition, in many instances, bad, but it is generally superior to that of other nations of Europe ; and I cannot assent to your assumption, that you will give them more work by admitting foreign corn, nor can I believe your other assumption, that you will elevate their condition by diminishing their wages (cheers). I know you will respond to that by telling me that the wages of labour do not depend on the price of corn, and with all those details which we have heard repeated almost to weariness, and I will not enter into that subject (an Hon. Member on the Opposition benches here made some observation across the House). Well, I will go into it if you like (cheers); but I was mindful of the hour, and did not like to detain the House (cheers). I will admit, then, that the wages of labour do not depend on the price of corn—I will take your principle as laid down by the first Minister of the Crown—I will admit that they do not depend on it, but that the price of corn rather acts upon it in an inverse ratio. Then how does the price of corn injure the manufacturers? (cheers). It cannot be in affecting the cost of your article, because the lower the rate of wages the cheaper your article should be (great cheering). But if your position, and that of the Right Hon. Gentleman—for he borrowed it from you—is true (cheers); suppose you have a great importation from the Baltic—assume it to be 4,000,000, for the purpose of argument—suppose the price should fall in consequence, if the wages of labour are not increased, why should the consumption be greater? (hear, hear). And what would be the effect of your importing these 4,000,000 quarters that are to give such an impulse to trade? If there is not a greater consumption than before, you only substitute 4,000,000 quarters at 30s. for the same quantity at 50s., and there must be a proportionate displacement of labour (hear, hear); and if there is this displacement of labour, the agriculturist must go and mingle with the manufacturing population ; and then as you carry on your business on the principle of supply and demand, the rate of your wages must fall (cheers). I reduce you to this dilemma, and leave you to get out of it (cheers). Another great point, which has been made an apparent objection to the Corn Laws, is the effect of a sudden importation on our monetary system, by the contraction of the currency. We say that all the evils you attribute to the Corn Laws are in fact owing to your importation of corn from abroad. You reply, if we had a regular supply, this would not be the case; if we could have a regular supply, I entirely agree with you. But suppose a regular supply in this, as in all other things, depends on the regular demand, and there should be a great and extraordinary deficiency in England, you would still have to go on importing an extra supply ; that would leave you with still £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 to pay, and you would still have the same derangement of the currency. I have omitted much I intended to urge, and I may have said even more than was necessary. My object was to maintain that the abolition of the Corn Laws, as they at present are, will be attended with no good, and I was unwilling that the debate should be closed without a full understanding of the position I take up, and of the reasons by which I am actuated in siding with my

Hon. Friends. I am not, and never have been, one of those vindicating the policy hitherto pursued in regard to agriculture by the allegation of burdens on land. I neglected the allegation, not forgetting the fact; for I maintain, and I entreat my friends to bear this in mind, that their cause is to be supported on great principles (cheers). I venture, feebly perhaps, and shortly certainly at this hour, to indicate those great principles—principles on which a high policy, and on which this system, ought to be maintained. And I say first with reference to England, that I look abroad to all countries, and, impressed with the conclusions I arrive at, I say that it is the first duty of a Minister, as it is the first interest of a state, to create and continue the balance between the two great and primary branches of a national industry (loud cheers). It is a necessity which has been recognised by every great Minister for the last two hundred years; it has always been allowed as one of the most important of all the duties of a Government, and the reasons why it should be are so obvious that I need scarcely advert to them. Why should we maintain that balance involves political considerations and social considerations affecting the happiness of the people, the order of the population, and above all, and before all, involving the stability of the state (hear, hear). But I go further than that; I say that we are bound, as Englishmen, to do more than that. I repeat now what I have repeated before; I will not shrink from it; and I say that there are special reasons which govern you, why you should not only attempt to uphold that balance I have referred to, but why, further, you should give a preponderance to the agricultural interest (cheers). I don't say predominance, as said the Hon. Member for Manchester (Mr. Gibson) the other night, as if quoting from a speech made by the Noble Lord, the Member for London, though that Noble Lord never used the word; but I do repeat preponderance, which indicates what is perfectly legal and constitutional (hear, hear). And you are bound to do so for this reason—because, as Englishmen, you have a territorial constitution (cheers). You have thrown upon the land the revenues of the church, the administration of justice, the estate of the poor; and you value that territorial constitution not as serving to gratify the pride or to pamper the luxuries of proprietors, but because, in a territorial constitution, you, and those who have preceded you, have found the only security for self-government—and, more than that, because it is a constitution in opposition to that system of centralization which has taken root, and enslaved the energies of surrounding nations (great cheering). That is why I have ever supported, and that is why I still support, this principle of preponderance (hear). My constituents are not landlords; they are not great capitalists; they are in fact, the children of industry, born only to employment; but they believe that their own material interests are involved in the maintenance of this system, which would favour the native industry of the country by ensuring a real and healthy competition (hear, hear). They believe, likewise, that their social and political interests are involved in the same system; they believe that it is a system which has granted them their rights and liberties; and I, Sir, agree with them. I know that these are old arguments,

but I know also that they are strong, and that it is need<sup>all</sup> employed should not be forgotten. I know, and it is from the highest authority in the matter, that this movement is not alone a thing of Corn Laws, it is the transference of power from one class to another (cheers). I know that it is a transference from the class who are the present possessors to another, not less distinguished for intelligence and wealth—to the great manufacturers of England. My conscience assures me that I am not one of those who have been slow in doing justice to the intelligence of that class, and most assuredly I am not one who envies their wide and deserved prosperity. But I can best fulfil my duty, in this age of political revolutions, when system after system is falling around us, when we know and are told that we are to be rescued from the alleged power of one class only to sink under the avowed dominion of another (cheers)—I, for one, if this is to be the end of all our struggle—if this is to be the great result of this enlightened era,—solemnly protest against the ignominious catastrophe (cheers). I believe that the monarchy of England, its Sovereign, with an influence mitigated by the constitutional authority of the estates of the realm, has still a root in the hearts of Englishmen, and is still capable of securing happiness to the people and power to the state (cheers). But if it be true that it is for these changes we have progressed, I, for one, anxious as I am to continue our present authority, ready to make as many sacrifices as can any man for that object, hope, if we are to have, and must have, a change, that the foundations will be deep, that the scheme will be comprehensive, and, in the end, instead of falling under such a thralldom, a thralldom of capital (cheers), a thralldom of those who make a boast of their intelligence and who are proud of their wealth, I say, for one, that if we must bend to a new course of things, I will strive to maintain the ancient throne and moral monarchy of England; and sooner than we should so fall, I would prefer to find those invigorating energies we should lose in an educated and enfranchised people (loud cheers).

On the motion of Mr. G. BANKES, the debate was adjourned.

### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23.

The adjourned debate was resumed by

MR. E. BULLER, who began by referring to the speech of the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury, which he said was only a repetition of the old arguments which had been refuted as often as they had been brought forward. The Hon. Member had argued that imports without reciprocity drained the country of specie, while the system of Free Trade would lower both prices and wages. If our reductions of duties were opposed on the ground that foreign nations gave us no return, it ought to be shown that our partial adoption of the system up to the present time had done us injury. The increased exports and imports proved that the contrary was the case. In 1820 our imports were £32,000,000, in 1843 they were £70,000,000. Our exports in 1820 were £38,000,000, in 1843 they had increased to £117,000,000. Thus our imports had doubled, and our exports trebled. In the case of France particularly, the same principle had worked in the same way. During the 12 years preceding 1825 our

exports through France were £326,858. They had increased in 1833 to £939,000. Between 1833 and 1844 our imports from France rose from an average of £326,000 to an average of £3,035,000,—our exports through France had increased in a still greater increasing ratio ; they were no less than £3,340,000. This had been the result of our liberal system, and if it were carried to its full length it would meet with a still more complete success. The Hon. Gentleman the Member for Shrewsbury said the trade of Turkey had been ruined by free importations ; but there were practices in the Ottoman empire calculated to fetter industry and check enterprise. A hattı scheriff of the Minister of Turkey, in which various new institutions were promised for the purpose of giving security to property, regulating taxation, &c., contained a virtual confession of old errors in which there was enough to induce the belief that if the commerce of Turkey had declined, it was not owing to free importation. The Hon. Gentleman had also urged that it would be dangerous for this country to depend on foreign countries for a supply of grain in the event of a war. But if they were dependent on foreign countries to any extent, the argument was of equal weight ; and it was admitted that while England was mistress of the seas, supplies from every part of the world might be procured. The Hon. Member for Shrewsbury had also contended that with free imports of corn there would be lower wages. The argument was destitute of foundation. Four millions of quarters at 30s. per quarter displaced an equal quantity of home-grown corn at 50s. But what was the result ? The purchasers paid £6,000,000 instead of £10,000,000 ; and retained £4,000,000 to supply other articles of consumption. No portion of the capital which employed British labour was removed. By giving them additional comforts and luxuries, the people were raised, not only in the social scale, but in moral position. What was the great principle of the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury ? To give protection to the agricultural interest—to give power to a class. But how would other classes like this preference ? Suppose an effort was made to extend protection beyond that class, it could not be applied to the export trade or the moneyed interest. Contrasting Free Trade with Protection, he thought the preponderance of argument was clearly in favour of the former. He should not suggest any amendment to the proposition, which would receive his cordial and earnest support, and he tendered to the Members of the Government his tribute of praise for having, under circumstances of peculiar difficulty, acted in a manner at once consistent with their duty to their Sovereign and with the interests of the people.

CAPTAIN BATESON said, that during this protracted debate only one Irish county member had addressed the House ; he felt bound, therefore, to state his reasons of giving his decided opposition to the measure proposed by her Majesty's Government. Having made these observations, it was his intention to confine his remarks chiefly to his own unhappy country. No man more deeply lamented the failure of the potato crop in Ireland, and no man was more anxious to assist in passing any measures calculated to alleviate the distress which would be caused by it ; but was it not a mockery to come forward and tell them that Ireland would be benefited by a measure

which will depreciate the price of her agricultural produce, upon the sale of which 11-12ths of her population depended for their maintenance and support? Bills had been brought into that House for the improvement of waste lands and for drainage in Ireland; there were at present in that country nearly 4,000,000 of acres which would have been gradually reclaimed and brought into cultivation under the fostering influence of Protection; Landlords would willingly have laid out their capital, secure of a return for their money, and having, in addition, the supreme satisfaction of knowing that they were contributing, in no small degree, to the amelioration of the condition of their fellow-countrymen: he was happy to say there were many bright instances of this growing spirit among Irish landlords. But if this measure of the Right Hon. Baronet were carried, did anybody suppose or expect that landlords would lay out their capital in this manner, with the certainty of loss staring them in the face? Could the tenant, unassisted, even if he had it rent free, first reclaim the bog, and then grow corn upon it, so as to compete successfully with the foreigner, who has the advantage of climate, and whose land is now in a high state of cultivation? No. If this measure were passed, the bog would still remain barren, the hill-side would grow nothing but heather, and one of the chief channels of employment for our teeming population would be permanently blocked up, and their moral and social improvement materially retarded. He believed the measure would be destructive alike to the agriculture and export trade of Ireland, which would be exposed to competition with the foreigner in the market of England. He protested against so hazardous and revolutionary a scheme; he implored them to pause ere they severed one of the two great bonds between England and Ireland—the Irish Church and the export trade to England. He could not doubt but that this measure would have the effect of stimulating the advocates of the repeal of the union to increased exertions (hear, hear). They would say to the farmer, “England has deprived you of the benefit her markets have hitherto afforded you for the sale of your corn, your butter, your beef, your pork.” To the hand-loom weaver they would say, “Your occupation is gone; your linen trade is ruined; you are in no better position than the foreigner; none of you can now refuse to join us in the cry of ‘Hurrah, for repeal!’” (hear). Again, let him implore the House to pause before it placed such a powerful weapon in the hands of artful and designing agitators; and he confessed he feared it might be but the foreshadowing of other revolutions, even of more vital interest, which would lead to the destruction of our once much prized constitution, and the dismemberment of this great empire. He would have them take care, lest while the movement be onward, it be not at the same time downward (hear, hear). In conclusion let him ask the Right Hon. Baronet, supposing this great scheme, this comprehensive measure should have been proved by bitter and dear-bought experience to have failed, supposing (for the Right Hon. Baronet was bound to provide against every contingency) there should be days of adversity in store for this country—if, when thousands of acres which now grew corn should be thrown out of cultivation, want of employment, and consequent

distress prevail in the manufacturing districts, and to this should be superadded all the horrors of war—let him ask the Right Honourable Baronet how would he then answer the cry of those despairing multitudes? Let him ask him how were they to retrace their steps? How were they to regain the footing they had lost? How would he restore to this country the vantage ground he was now so tamely giving up?

“Facilis descensus averni,  
Sed revocare gradum——  
Hoc opus, hic labor est.”

MR. M. GORE said the opinions he was about to express, and the vote he intended to give, were opinions, and would be a vote, at variance with those of a large body within that House, for whom he entertained the highest esteem and the sincerest regard; it would also be a vote at variance with the sentiments of many without the House, for whom also, as for the others, he felt the highest regard; moreover, the opinions he then entertained on this subject were at variance with the opinions he formerly held (hear, hear); and, in justice to himself and the public, he felt bound to come forward manfully and openly and state the reasons that influenced him on the present occasion. What subject or question could be named on which there had not been change, both in that House and the country? Take the Catholic question—the slavery question—take the present question of the Corn Laws—and what great discrepancies of opinion would not be found to have existed upon them? In 1814 or 1815 the advocates of the Corn Laws thought 80s. or 90s. a quarter only a fair price for corn; yet the same gentlemen afterwards allowed that they had been in error on this subject, and that 50s. or between 50s. and 60s. was a fair price (hear). Mr. Huskisson himself, one of the greatest names of that House, was, both in 1815, and afterwards, a strong advocate of the Protection measures of that day; yet, it was well known, that before his death, he was of opinion that the Corn Laws could not be maintained (hear, hear). If it was an error, therefore, though he could not allow it to be an error to admit the force of reasoning, it was one of which that House, and men on both sides of it, had been repeatedly guilty (hear, hear). He considered that it was altogether impossible that, as some had supposed, any commercial regulations could ever expose England to a deluge of foreign corn; and, on examination, such would be found to be the inevitable inference. He had made enquiries, extensively, among merchants and others engaged in the American and European corn trade, and the results he would as briefly as possible lay before the House. As concerned Dantzic, the prices of wheat at that port, according to the statement of Mr. Jacobs, who put ordinary priced corn on board for 40s. a quarter, were as follows:—Price per quarter, 50s.; freight to London, 4s. 8d.; insurance, 1s. 4d.; charges, 6s. 9d.; duty, 3s. 6d.; making 66s. 3d. Another gentleman, also in a Dantzic house, had assured him that the charges for freightage, insurance, landing, and lading, amounted to 10s. per quarter. At Odessa, for the three years ending in 1840, the price of wheat was 34s. 6d. when sold on the spot; the charges for freightage amounting to 10s. 10d., and being, as he knew from a

competent authority, never below 15s. per quarter. He had also been informed, by merchants largely connected with Odessa, that they were unable to import corn under 48s. to 50s. a quarter; and a considerable quantity of Odessa corn is always carried to the shores of the Mediterranean. It might be said, that an inducement being held out, the agricultural industry of these countries would undergo, and were capable of undergoing, great improvements; but it was forgotten that, to effect that end, there was a want of the necessary capital, labour, and facilities of conveyance. The estates on which the corn was grown were held in such a manner that there were great impediments, even if there was the inclination, to any material accession of that capital employed in the cultivation of land. The existence of feudal tenures would also be an effectual bar to the concentration of labour: the labourers were serfs; and, in the great majority of instances, could not be removed from one estate to another. And then, with respect to the modes of conveyance; it was known that corn was conveyed to Dantzic by water carriage, and on arriving there, the boats, valued at £80 each, carrying 250 quarters, were broken up, and sold for a mere trifle when compared with the original cost. To Odessa the corn was brought overland, 400 or 500 miles, by means of carts, few in number, and in other respects altogether unequal to giving any facility to a great trade. Would not the knowledge of these circumstances fully justify this conclusion, that, as far as the continent of Europe was concerned, no great increase for a number of years could be anticipated in the quantity of provisions to be imported into Great Britain. The Hon. Member for Somersetshire had alluded to America, and had contended that it was out of the question for the English agriculturists to expect any successful, any but a ruinous, competition with the corn growers on the other side of the Atlantic. It should, however, be borne in mind that in America capital was absent, labour was excessively high, and that the yield per acre was very small in comparison with what was found to be the case in England and other countries in Europe. It was quite true, as had been said by the Hon. Member, that the extent of land under, or about to be under, cultivation was prodigious; but was that a circumstance favourable to the Hon. Member's argument? What did they deduce from the reports of the Agricultural Societies in America? Why, they would see that the great subject of complaint with those desirous of beholding improvements was, that very extent of land under cultivation, causes a careless and unscientific cultivation (hear, hear). At an agricultural meeting in Albany, in the winter of 1844, Mr. O'Reilly said—"Such has been the depreciation of the wheat crops, owing to the exhaustion of the soil, consequent on ill-judged farming, that the product of the wheat lands, between the Seneca lake and Virginia river, has not, for the last three or four years, exceeded the low average of eleven or twelve bushels per acre. Indeed, he had authority for declaring that, in reference to a single county (Seneca), the average yield is now not over ten bushels per acre." Dr. Bukman, addressing the County Agricultural Society said—"Where is the farm that will now upon the average yield forty bushels of wheat to the acre? If in this assemblage there is an individual who owns

that farm, and realizes that result, I will stop. No one speaks. If not forty, then thirty, if not thirty, then twenty." Mr. Van Ranselaer, president of the Agricultural Society of Ranselaer county said—"One reason why our land has not advanced more rapidly, grows out of the wide circle in which it is expanded. New lands yield with but comparative little labour; and to produce a certain amount, many acres are put into cultivation; when these fail to make a profitable return, the farmer, instead of repairing the exhaustion of the soil, often adopts, as he supposes, an easier method of obtaining his purpose, by moving to one of the new states, where a rich harvest may be reaped with little trouble of sowing. To cultivate less land, and in a superior manner, is the point to be ascertained." Mr. Kirby, president of the Jefferson County Society, speaking of the Repeal of our Corn Laws, said—"It appears, by an official report made to the British Parliament, in 1841, that the average price of wheat, for the seven previous years, at the principal ports of the Baltic and the Black Sea, was 77 cents per bushel; while, during the same years, the average price at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, was 1 dollar, 40 cents. The cost of freight to England, from the European ports referred to, was 13 cents per bushel. The freight from our ports to England was 17 to 18 cents per bushel. Thus it is apparent that our most favoured wheat region cannot compete, even-handed, with the continent of Europe for the wheat trade with England, unless we consent to a general reduction of wages to the European standard—a thing quite out of the question." Tooke says—"Barring any extraordinary difference in the seasons, I should expect that the price here, with the ports always open at a duty of 22s., would, in a series of years of some length, average about 45s. This country, but more especially the port of London, will be the emporium of the trade in corn between Europe and America. Thus, then, will be a great increase of trade, and we shall be sure of supply if our crops are deficient." Allusions had been made in the course of the debate to the calculation as to what would be the remunerating price to the English farmer; and the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had been asked to say what he thought a fair price. But he (Mr. Gore) must say, that of all the difficult questions to be solved, the present seemed to him the most difficult (hear, hear). It was a subject on which a great diversity of opinions had prevailed, and still did prevail, and it was also a subject concerning which an agreement would perhaps never be come to. In 1814 and 1815, men of great experience and of high authority had endeavoured to show, and very generally convinced the public, that the agriculturist could never leave the market with profit, if he failed in obtaining the price of 80s. a quarter (hear, hear). In 1818 similar statements had been made by individuals, whose opinions were entitled to the same respect, and yet prices had declined, and what had been the consequence? It was a consequence in which the nation had rejoiced—a great increase in the profits of agricultural industry (hear, hear). On this point Mr. Tooke said:—

"The averages of the six years following, when there was no foreign wheat, or no proportion worth mentioning in the market, were, 1832,

58s. 8d. ; 1833, 52s. 11d. ; 1834, 46s. 2d. ; 1835, 39s. 4d. ; 1836, 48s. 6d. ; 1837, 55s. 10d. ; average, 50s. 3d. But if it be considered that by far the largest quantities sold were in the three years of the lowest prices, viz.—1834, 46s. 2d. ; 1835, 39s. 4d. ; 1836, 48s. 6d. ; average, 44s. 8d. ; and that, during that period, although, as usual, on the occurrence of low prices, there were loud complaints of agricultural distress, the country never exhibited a greater extent, nor a higher degree of cultivation ; it is perfectly fair to presume, that, at a price of 45s., there would be no reason to apprehend that much, if any, land would be thrown out of cultivation. The general fact is, in point, by results beyond controversy, that the agricultural productions of the kingdom were never, as far as the seasons permitted, on a larger scale than in 1836 and 1837, notwithstanding the alleged discouragement of the low prices of 1834 and 1835.” For his (Mr. Gore’s) part, he was inclined to believe, that the principal aids to a rapid progress in agricultural science, and to an increase in the profits of those engaged in agriculture, were to be found in the development of our manufacturing interest (hear). If they looked to the periods when the greatest improvements had taken place in agriculture, they would discover that those improvements were coincident with an extension of the capital, and an addition to the amount of labour engaged in manufactures (cheers). If they took the history of this country at the period immediately previous to the accession of George III. to the throne, and when manufactures in Great Britain were in their infancy, they would perceive that agriculture at the same time was stationary, and had undergone, for a considerable number of years, scarcely any improvement. When in 1760, attention was being drawn to manufactures, and when their value as an ingredient of a nation’s wealth was recognised, agriculture, it would be remarked, had made a corresponding advance, and since then the progress of the two interests, fostered by capital and skill, had been in conjunction (cheers). And judging, therefore, from the past, he felt perfectly assured that the measure, the adoption of which was now recommended, would, if carried, make the further progress, both of agriculture and in manufactures, more certain and more rapid (cheers). For the reason he had stated he should give his decided and cordial support to the measure of Her Majesty’s Government. He believed that the measure was framed upon sound principles ; he thought it calculated to promote all the great interests of this great empire. It did not swell any one interest into unnatural proportions, but it preserved the symmetry of the whole. He thought that the prosperity of the country rested not upon the enactments of the statute-book, but the energy and enterprise of the people, inspired by free institutions and guarded by equal laws. Looking to these considerations, he had no fear of competition with other countries ; and, under the present measure, he believed that all the great interests of the country would receive benefit ; and looking beyond the interests of this island, and to the distant shores to which our commerce extends, he thought that this measure, to which he gave his cordial support, would benefit the whole human race (hear, hear). He would not support the measure if he thought it had been yielded to agitation or anything like fear. Such

a motive he considered to be unworthy of him and of the House. Whilst dissenting from other members upon this question, he honoured and admired their firmness ; and if they thought it for the welfare of the country that the Corn Laws should be maintained they were bound to support it ; and whilst he differed from them, he honoured and admired their conduct. He rested the question upon higher ground—upon its intrinsic merits ; for if it could not bear investigation, let it be rejected. He hoped that the House, in conformity with the prayer with which it auspicated their proceedings, would come to a conclusion upon this question divested of all party feeling and private affection, and would decide according to what they thought would best promote the welfare, the greatness, the glory, and the prosperity of this great empire, and the happiness of the millions subject to our sway (hear).

MR. FITZGERALD wished to impress upon her Majesty's Ministers the urgent necessity of relieving his unfortunate country from the horrors of famine. He was happy to say, that it was with no small gratification and pleasure that he had listened to the speech of the Right Hon. Baronet the other night ; and he (Mr. Fitzgerald) could corroborate the accounts read by the Right Hon. Baronet and the statements he had made. He could not but express his satisfaction likewise at the conduct of the Right Hon. Gentleman the Secretary for the Home Department, in introducing measures for promoting public works in Ireland, so as to give the poor the means of buying what they wanted. He was not going to answer the statements of the Hon. Member opposite (Captain Bateson) respecting the manufactures of Ireland. He acknowledged he knew more about land than manufactures. With regard to the measure of her Majesty's Government, he confessed that until he entered the House his idea was for perfect Free Trade, and although he had not altered his opinions, still he thought that the measure of her Majesty's Government was the best that could be brought forward at the present moment. He thought that any sudden change to Free Trade (though he was in favour of Free Trade) would do rather injury than good, and that it showed the wisdom and good sense of the Right Hon. Baronet not to bring forward a measure of sudden Free Trade, but to afford such a time for the measure to take effect as was usual in agricultural operations and changes of crops. He acknowledged that when the measure was first brought forward by the Government great alarm was felt in Ireland ; and as a Member of one of the largest counties in Ireland, and almost entirely agricultural, he had felt it to be his duty to hear the opinions of his constituents, and see how far they accorded with his own. The result was, that though alarmed at first, coupled with the compensations—which he, however, considered no compensations whatever—they were disposed decidedly to support the measure of her Majesty's Government. Considering all the other changes for the last few years, a change in the commercial policy of this country must be made. He should support the measure of the Right Hon. Baronet, for this amongst other reasons, that he admired the moral courage with which he brought forward and sustained the policy which he thought it his duty to pursue. There could be no doubt that a

Government, with the Noble Lord the Member, 35, 39s. 4d.; 1836, its head, could do much for Ireland, because the it be considered country regarded the present Ministerial party as their years of the the Liberal party as their friends, but no man could doubt 48s. 6d.; measure now under their consideration was one calculated usual, promote the interest of a few, but to advance the prosperity of the nation at large.

MR. LOCKHART said, that the present was an occasion upon which he could not give a silent vote. He felt a deep sense of the services which the present Ministers of the Crown had rendered to the nation, and he felt sincere regret at finding himself compelled to vote against any proposition emanating from the present Cabinet. Although he highly approved of the financial measures of the Right Hon. Baronet, now at the head of the Government, yet his (Mr. Lockhart's) constituents thought—and he concurred with them in so thinking—that as long as any manufactures enjoyed any species of Protection, so long the produce of land ought to be protected. In his opinion a reasonable Protection should be enjoyed by all classes. He was for moderate and equal protections. By no means did he wish for any exclusive privileges. Up to the years 1818 and 1819 the cotton trade enjoyed a protection to the extent of 85½ per cent. In fact, no trade was more protected than the cotton. But now those who were concerned in the cotton trade cried out for universal Free Trade. He had heard some Hon. Members say, that they were much alarmed at the propositions of the Right Hon. Baronet; but there were others who did not appear to be at all alarmed at the probability of its sweeping away all the small farmers. Now, in the county which he represented, there were 3,000 small farmers; and certainly that fact appeared to him to furnish a very strong reason for looking with extreme suspicion and distrust upon any proposition of this nature.

SIR G. CLERK said, that he very unwillingly obtruded himself upon the attention of the House, but he could not allow a question which had been so fully debated to be disposed of without saying a few words; at the same time he did not presume to think he could add much to what had been already said. The Hon. Member for Shrewsbury had told the House that the objections to the measure were twofold—one founded upon the non-existence of an emergency, the other upon the construction of a new system of policy. As to the existence of the emergency, he believed that that was a position which could not be successfully contested, and which it was really unnecessary to debate at any length. In discussing the other ground of objection, the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury told them that the present measure went to the construction of a new system of commercial policy. Now he denied that altogether. The present proposition was nothing more than a following out of that which was introduced by his Right Hon. Friend in 1842, and a development of those supported by him in 1824, when they were brought in by Mr. Huskisson and the Chancellor of the Exchequer of that period (cries of "oh, oh"). Those were the doctrines which his Right Hon. Friend supported in 1824, when Mr. Huskisson brought in his measures of Free Trade. They had been

a motive he considered Government and the Parliament had run wild Whilst dissent in of Free Trade. The propositions of that day were honoured and but they were submitted to; and if Hon. Members the welfare view calmly the measures now proposed, they would they say they went very little beyond the state of things which had existed for the last twenty years, and that there was really no intention of introducing a new system of commercial policy. With regard to the emergency, he wished he could consider it, as some Hon. Gentlemen did—temporary. In that debate they had looked too exclusively to the misery in Ireland which would prevail during the present summer; but they must look further, they must look what the crop of potatoes, which he was sorry to say was the solitary food of 4,000,000 of the people there, would be in the subsequent years of 1847 and 1848, because they must bear in mind not only that the crop of the present year was destroyed, but that there was an absolute impossibility of obtaining sufficient seed for future culture (“hear, hear,” from an Hon. Member below the gangway). Did the Hon. Member doubt that statement? If he did, perhaps he was not in the House when a question was put by the Hon. Member for Cockermouth (Mr. Horsman) to the Right Hon. Baronet near him (Sir R. Peel). He (Sir G. Clerk) had himself made some inquiries among his own neighbours, and he had been told by men of great intelligence, though the disease did not exist to the same extent last spring, yet that there had been symptoms, and, as they had not been sufficiently careful as to the potatoes they had used for seed, there was reason to believe that the seed sown did have the germ of the disease last year. He thought that after what Professor Lindley had communicated to the Right Hon. Baronet, and what had been by him stated to the House, there was reason to apprehend that the disease would not be confined to the present season, and that even supposing they could procure seed to be sown for next year, the disease would prevail. But it was not only to Ireland they were to look to give a supply of food for the present year, although the potato was not the exclusive food, it did form a great part of the food of the people of Scotland and of England. Now the disease had been found to prevail to a great extent in every part of the united kingdom (hear). In the autumn of the year 1826, the Government was somewhat in the same situation as in the autumn of 1845. The Government of that day was obliged to take upon itself that responsibility; they opened the ports, and admitted oats; they then came down to Parliament and asked for an indemnity; and, having made out a sufficient case, Parliament passed the bill (hear, hear). But what did Lord Liverpool say then?—that the power required such deliberation, and caution, and care in its exercise, and that the Executive might cause such serious losses to individuals, that it was a power which ought not to be exercised by the Government, and care ought to be taken that it should not be necessary; and Mr. Canning showed not only that this objection appertained to the law of 1815, which was sought to be amended, but it applied also to any fixed duty, however small in amount it might be. If that were the great argument for defending the sliding scale—for he had always admitted the argument of Hon. Gentlemen opposite of its bad effect in a commercial point of

view, by increasing fluctuations, and making the duty move sometimes in an inverse direction to the price—and if the great argument was that it would adjust itself to the necessity of the case, and render it unnecessary for the Government to interfere, he said that here was a case in 1845 in which it had failed in that respect; and it was the right and bounden duty of a prudent Government to guard against the recurrence of such a defect (hear, hear). He said, therefore, if the law did not answer its purpose in this respect, it would be the duty of the Government, as Lord Liverpool had done in 1827, to show how they could modify and alter the existing law (hear, hear). If, however, it were said that the present change would be fatal to the agriculturists of this country, he must observe that very few had gone into any detailed argument of the nature or extent of the danger they apprehended. He admitted that the Hon. Member for Somersetshire was an exception. (“And for Sunderland,” from the agricultural members.) He would come to the Hon. Member for Sunderland presently, but the Hon. Member for Somersetshire did go into the question at considerable length. He stated that he was alarmed at the enormous quantity of corn which would be poured into this country from two nations—Russia and the United States. But if they looked at the produce of Russia, they would find a very small crop of wheat to be poured in; the great part of the land was cultivated with rye, and in the south with hemp and tobacco. The Hon. Gentleman referred to the same district which deceived a Noble Friend of his (Lord Stanley) in 1839, the very name of which raised a smile in that House, Tamboff (laughter). There was an estimated extent of 5,000,000 square miles, and the produce was over-estimated by the consuls, having translated the number of chetworts 39,000,000, whereas the fact was, that the produce was only 39,000 chetworts in the best seasons, so that from that quarter there was not to be apprehended any great supply of food. But during the last ten years there had been a deficient supply of corn at home, and we had ransacked not only Europe, but the whole world, and could not then obtain a supply except at a great price. What did we obtain? If they looked at the accounts of imports from Russia they would find the following quantities of wheat imported from Russia in the years undermentioned:—

Years.						Quarters.
1835	...	...	..	...	...	—
1836	..	...	...	...	...	1,036
1837	...	...	...	...	...	11,244
1838	...	...	...	...	...	41,339
1839	...	...	..	...	...	371,693
1840	...	...	..	...	...	268,263
1841	..	...	...	...	...	99,599
1842	...	...	...	...	..	288,087
1843	...	...	...	...	...	53,666
1844	...	...	...	...	...	104,458
Total ..						1,239,385
Average						123,938·5

In 1839, when the price was almost a famine price, the quantity was only 371,693 quarters, and the average largest quantity that could be sent to England, according to Mr. Meek's account, is 672,500 quarters. That was what it was supposed Great Britain could get of the whole produce of Russia ; because Hon. Gentlemen always argued as if Great Britain was the only country that required corn ; whereas it was found that only a small part of the corn exported came to England. By the competition of others the prices would be raised to the English level, and though he admitted there would be a tendency to an equalization of prices, English prices would not fall to the continental level, but the continental prices would be raised to the English level. Now, with regard to the United States,—the Hon. Member for Somersetshire thought that as there was every year an increasing population, there would be no limit to the corn supplied from her virgin soil. There could be no greater mistake than supposing we were likely to receive any greater supply of corn from America as the population increased. In 1790 and 1793, the population of America was only 4,000,000, and she had exported a larger quantity of corn than in any year since, except 1840, when the preceding harvest was more abundant than had ever been known ; still a small proportion only found its way into the English market. In America very accurate agricultural statistics were collected with the census every 10 years, and that in the year 1840 might be relied on. By the return,—“Population, and Quantity of Wheat produced in the United States in the years 1840 and 1843 ; and Total Quantities of Wheat and Flour exported, and of Flour shipped for England, in the years 1840 to 1843,” it appeared—

	1840.	1841.	1842.	1843.
Population .....	17,069,453			19,183,583
Estimated crop of Wheat ..	Qrs. 10,602,909	Qrs.	Qrs.	Qrs. 12,538,857
Total quantity of Wheat exported ...	215,108	108,573	102,245	54,393
Total quantity of Flour exported .....	Barrels. 1,897,501	Barrels. 1,515,817	Barrels. 1,283,602	Barrels. 1,126,538
Quantity of Flour shipped for England	620,919	208,984	208,024	93,366

leaving only four bushels a head for the American population, including the quantity used for seed. The return showed that while the population had increased 3,000,000 in three years, and reached 20,000,000, America could export little more than half what it did in 1840. Those states which bordered on the Atlantic, and were

advanced in civilization, had not more corn than they could consume. Then, Great Britain was not the only party America supplied with flour ; the Brazils were supplied by them ; they supplied also our West India Islands. There was very little chance, therefore, under any circumstances, that a great additional supply of wheat would come in from that country. If, then, from those countries which most excited the alarm of Hon. Members we were not likely to have very much increase of supply, surely, instead of talking about inundations of foreign corn, it would be much better to consider whether, if our population increased in the same ratio that it had observed lately, the increase of supply from Russia, however much the resources of that country might become developed, would enable us to give our population enough. In the last five years we had imported nearly 10,000,000 quarters of corn, but in that time no one, he thought, would say that the population had been overfed (hear, hear): and if the importation for the next 10 years was to be 3,000,000 quarters a-year, instead of 2,000,000 quarters, not only would there not be an acre of land thrown out of cultivation, but he believed there would be a great demand for the home supply (hear, hear). The experience of 30 years taught that, while the Corn Law had been in existence, the rate of population had advanced much more rapidly than the rate of production, and that in every ten years this country had been obliged to import a greater proportion of its consumption than in the period preceding. That the effect, then of abolishing the law would be to throw arable land out of cultivation, appeared to him to be an argument wholly destitute of foundation. With respect to what had been said of fluctuations of price, it must be remembered that the fluctuations were greater under the Corn Law than they had been between the years 1786 and 1792, when the corn trade was subject to no restrictions. The Hon. Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson) had said he would give the House some information, as a practical man, and he stated that in 1837 he had imported into this country a quantity of wheat which, all costs included, he could sell at 25s. a quarter. He (Sir G. Clerk) had no doubt of the fact. But what was the situation of the corn trade in 1837? Why this country had had four consecutive abundant harvests; we had imported little or nothing; in that year the crops on the continent were supposed to be good, and in August, 1837, the price of wheat did fall at Hamburgh to between 29s. 4d. and 22s. a quarter, the rate of freight at that time being 2s. 6d. a quarter. Therefore, he could fully conceive that the Hon. Member, if he speculated at all, might have bought a small parcel of inferior wheat at Hamburgh at 22s. 4d. a quarter; that it might be brought across for 24s. 10d., and sold for 25s. But in August, 1838, a great change in prices in Holland took place. Wheat was dear then, because there had been a bad harvest, and the price rose to 63s. 9d., the rate of freights having risen from 2s. 6d. to 6s. 9d. the quarter. Also the duty here was at the *minimum*, and the anxiety of persons in Hamburgh to avail themselves of that drove up the prices to 63s. 9d. But that was gambling, and the mischief of such a state of things was, that it made the corn trade a matter of lottery and speculation. His Right Hon. Friend (Sir

R. Peel) in the course of his powerful speech referring to linen and other articles, summed them all up thus:—"We have reduced the duties upon a great number of articles; we made further reductions in 1842. Now, I call upon any man connected with the trades in which these reductions have taken place to tell me where he has suffered injury by them" (hear, hear). That challenge remained unanswered till Friday night last ("hear, hear," from the Protection benches), when the Hon. Member for Birmingham rose and stated in the course of his speech that the spelter or zinc trade had suffered from the reduction of the duty. Now, he (Sir George Clerk) would speak with diffidence, in opposition to the Hon. Member, on a matter with which he (Mr. Muntz) must be expected to be so intimately acquainted; but he confessed he had heard the statement of the Hon. Member with some astonishment, and he did not see how he made it out. He complained that in consequence of the reduction of duty the price of zinc had fallen from £75 to £45, and even to £15, per ton. Now, he (Sir G. Clerk) appealed to the Hon. Member, whether the manufacture of zinc had not recently undergone a great improvement,—whether it was not only a few years since the means had been discovered of making it malleable and converting it into useful purposes? Formerly we were dependent upon the zinc used for mixing with copper as alloy, and in making of brass upon the inferior kind of spelter or zinc, which was found in this country, in the shape of sulphuret of zinc, which was so brittle that it could not be converted into the beautiful articles into which it was at present manufactured. But the foreign zinc had been found susceptible of malleability, and was found in large quantities in the Prussian provinces near the Moselle. By the introduction of this an entirely new branch of manufacture had been established (hear, hear), giving employment to many hundred persons; whereas, if we had maintained a prohibitory duty, the price might have remained at £45, and the country would have been deprived of the power of manufacturing zinc in the numerous beautiful and useful articles into which it is now made (hear). The Hon. Member had also said that the present price of zinc was £20 per ton; but that it was not worth the while of any one in this country to continue the manufacture, and the consequence was, that all the zinc used here was manufactured on the continent. Now the fact was, that, with a duty of only ten per cent., the whole of the declared value of the imports of manufactured zinc was last year only £5, the duty upon which amounted to 10s. 6d. (hear, hear). Now let them look at the progress of the zinc trade in this country. He need not go further back than the last three years, because the articles into which it was now made had only recently been introduced. The quantity of zinc imported in 1843 and 1844 was about 10,000 tons in each year, of which more than one-half was exported to India and China, leaving 4,000 tons to be worked up into articles in this country. Now, what had been the effect of the total reduction of duty last year? Why, upwards of 12,000 tons had been imported, of which 2,000 had been exported, leaving 10,000 to be worked up into articles of manufacture in this country—thus affording to the public a very useful and valuable class of articles at a moderate price, and

giving employment to a large number of useful and valuable labourers (hear, hear). Then came the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury, who attempted to controvert the statements of the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) respecting the increase in the importations of silk since the reduction of the duty. The Hon. Member had stated that in the figures he brought forward on that occasion he had quoted from memory; but he ought not to trust to memory in those matters, for it so happened that in doing so he had fallen into error.—Here the Right Hon. Baronet proceeded to show that the statement of Sir R. Peel referred to waste silk, raw silk, and thrown silk, which had increased from 4,011,048lb. in 1824 to 6,208,021lb. in 1844, whereas the Hon. Gentleman (Mr. D'Israeli) applied his statement to raw silk alone. But the only fair criterion of the comparative effects of Free Trade and Restriction was to take the imports prior to 1824, when the duty on silk was reduced, and the imports after. Well, in 1814, ten years before the duty was reduced, the quantity of raw silk imported into this country was 1,504,235lb.; in 1824, 3,414,520lb.; in 1835 it was 4,151,008lb.; and in 1845 it had increased to 4,351,626lb.; being 150 per cent. of an increase as compared with 1823, the year before the duty was reduced, being a result as satisfactory as any that ever occurred. But the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury had asked if the Government were prepared to fight hostile tariffs with free imports? In answer to this, he begged to say, that the measures of Government had been introduced without any reference to foreign nations, but for the exclusive benefit of the community of England; and he (Sir G. Clerk) was at a loss to understand how, if we required those articles, which were the produce of other countries, we should deprive our people of them merely because those countries refused to take those articles which we produced (hear, hear). The Hon. Member pointed to the prohibitory tariff of Russia. It was certainly matter of regret that a country from which we imported so largely should keep up a prohibitory tariff; but he (Sir G. Clerk) hoped, with the example we were setting, and with the experience of other countries, Russia would soon find a more efficient mode of increasing its revenue by resorting to moderate customs duties, instead of a prohibitory tariff (hear, hear). But the Hon. Member said that we could do nothing without diplomacy—that France never gave us a *quid pro quo*. But was this borne out by the experience of the last 20 years? (hear). The Right Hon. Baronet then referred to the following articles, the produce of France, upon which duties had been reduced since 1830—wines, madder, prunes, flax, gloves, cambrics, clover seeds, kid skins, and silks. He then read the annexed statement of the declared value of British produce and manufactures exported to France in the following years:—in 1830, £475,884; 1831, £602,688; 1832, £674,791; 1833, £848,333; 1834, £1,116,885; 1835, £1,453,636; 1836, £1,591,381; 1837, £1,643,204; 1838, £2,314,141; 1839, £2,298,307; 1840, £2,378,149; 1841, £2,902,002; 1842, £3,193,939; 1843, £2,534,898; 1844, £2,656,259. The Hon. Gentleman the member for Shrewsbury had told them what sort of protection he wished to have, and he at the same time declared that he would not object to Free Trade if he could get it through the medium of diplo-

macy. The Hon. Member also said, that a Minister of this country was bound, in proposing systems of legislation, to give a preponderance to the landed interest (hear, hear). No man was more ready than he (Sir G. Clerk) to give to the landed aristocracy their just rights, but, at the same time, he thought it most dangerous to assert that those rights depended on keeping up the Corn Law (hear). That was a line of argument attributed to the agriculturist by Hon. Gentlemen opposite, a charge which they indignantly repudiated, yet it was the *cheval de bataille* of the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury the other night ("hear," and a cry of "No"). Well, the whole argument of the Hon. Member might have been a little above his (Sir G. Clerk's) comprehension, but as far as he could understand it that was its meaning (hear, hear); and the Hon. Gentleman added, that if Protection were taken away from the landed interest, an undue preponderance would then be given to the capitalist and the money interest (hear). He (Sir G. Clerk), as a landed proprietor, begged to disclaim any such sentiments. The arguments used by the agriculturists in favour of the Corn Laws were founded on a sense, not of their own exclusive interest, but of that of the whole country (hear). In conclusion, he confessed that he had formerly entertained opinions different from those which he now avowed—opinions similar to those held by Hon. Friends near him; but he would only request them to bestow the same pains on a consideration of the subject that he had endeavoured to bestow (ironical cheers), and make themselves really masters of the question (hear, hear). From the great majority of those Hon. Members they heard no arguments of their own (cheers); but only a declaration that the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government held certain opinions in 1839 and 1840, which then convinced them, and to which they adhered now, thus tacitly admitting that they were unable to form an opinion of their own ("oh"). Then if they did form opinions of their own, he wished they would state them (cheers from the Opposition benches). He wished they would give their reasons for the conduct they were pursuing, and why the course proposed by the Sovereign was so dangerous. For his own part he believed that those Hon. Members would be best consulting the interests of the class to which they belonged, and at the same time those of the public generally, by acceding to a settlement while there was yet time, and without waiting till perhaps they were forced to one very different. He supported the measure because he believed it to be the one best calculated to promote the interests of all classes of the community (cheers).

MR. MUNTZ rose to explain that he had never found fault with the duty being taken off spelter. The Right Hon. Baronet at the head of her Majesty's Government had challenged any man to show that the reduction of duty upon any article had injured the home manufacturers of that article. Now, he had referred to the case of spelter as an answer to the Right Hon. Baronet's challenge. He stated that up to 1816, all the zinc used here was made in this country, but that the reduction of the duty brought the price down from £75 to £45 a ton, and afterwards to £15, though it again rose to £20. The consequence was, that zinc could not now be manufactured at a profit in this

country, and it had consequently fallen into the hands of foreigners ("hear," from the Protectionists). But so far from complaining of the reduction of duty on that article, he thought it a very rational measure. He used 1,500 tons per annum himself, and he found great advantage flowing from the reduction in many respects. Nevertheless, the fact stood as he had stated it, that the manufacture of the article had entirely ceased in this country when the duty came off ("hear, hear," from the Protectionists).

MR. LIDDELL thought the Right Hon. Gentleman who had just concluded, had made one or two of the boldest assertions that had ever emanated even from the Treasury benches (hear). He had gone so far as to say that there was no change in the views of her Majesty's Government. Then why did he go before the constituency in 1842? Why did he protest against the changes then contemplated by the Noble Lord opposite? (hear). Why had the Noble Lord the Secretary for Ireland gone before his constituents, by whom he was likely to be rejected? (hear, hear). Why had so many Noble Lords and Hon. Gentlemen resigned their seats and gone before their constituents? Why had all these things taken place if there was no change in her Majesty's Government? ("hear," from the Protection benches). He must say that anything more startling than the assertion of the Right Hon. Gentleman he had never heard in that House. Again, the Right Hon. Gentleman stated that those who spoke in opposition to the measures of the Government should be called on to give their reasons for so doing. Why, these reasons were already provided for them. They had nothing to do but to look to the opinions and votes of the Right Hon. Gentleman himself, and on these found their arguments in support of the justice of the course they were now pursuing (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet had alluded to a petition presented to the House from the committee of the General Shipowners' Society of the city of London, in reference to the proposed reduction of the duty on Baltic timber from 25s. to 15s. The case of the petitioners, as stated by themselves, was to the effect that it was only through Protection by duties equivalent to the increased expenses of importation, that the market could be regularly supplied with timber from the British colonies to be placed in competition with that of the Baltic, so as to prevent a monopoly in favour of the latter, and permanently secure moderate prices; and further, that the greater part, if not the whole, of the increased importation from the Baltic, arising out of a diminution of duty, would be thrown into the hands of the foreign shipowner; who, with the foreign producer, would engross the entire benefit of the transfer of importation, to the injury of the British colonist and shipowner. The incapacity of the British shipowner to compete with the foreign appeared from the evidence taken before the committee on British shipping the year before last. The relative cost of navigating and victualling a British and a Prussian ship was there stated; the wages for three months in the British ship amounted to £169 10s., in the Prussian to £81 4s. 6d.; the expense for victualling the former was £96, the latter £39; showing how great an advantage the foreigner had. Even Adam Smith, with all his favour for Free Trade, confessed, in reference to the restrictive

policy of this country, that it had been beneficially applied in the case of the navigation laws. National security was the first thing to be attended to (hear, hear). In the port of London the wages of shipwrights had not varied for twenty-five years, mainly owing to a combination among the men, who would rather starve than take less than 6s. a day; at Toulon the wages of shipwrights were but 1½f. per day, while they were not under 4s. 6d. in our dockyards (hear). Foreign ships could be built at £5 or £6 a ton; at Sunderland they cost £10, and then were not equal to first-rate ships; first-rate ships built in the Thames cost £16 a ton, and to put them into complete order for sailing £21 a ton. How could we contend against such advantages? Were we to bring down our wages and the habits and condition of our seamen and artisans to the continental level? The Right Hon. Baronet asked whether we were to advance or retrograde; would this be advancing? (hear, hear). But further, with reference to the Baltic trade, the total amount of British tonnage entered inwards from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Prussia, in 1842, was 109,382 tons; of foreign, 341,533. In 1844, under the tariff, the former had only advanced to 130,170 tons; but the latter to 528,722 (hear, hear). But if the British shipowner were unable to contend permanently with the foreign in the Baltic trade, leave him the monopoly of the colonial trade by proper relative duties on Baltic and colonial timber, and the price would still be kept low by the competition of colonial with Baltic timber; and this, and not a high price of timber, was the object of the British shipowner (hear). The Right Hon. Baronet, however, stated as a reason for thinking it an exorbitant demand of the British shipowner that the duty on Baltic timber should not be reduced, that there was not now a ton of Baltic timber in the port of Liverpool fitted for building a first-rate or twelve years' ship. It was difficult to say what timber he meant, for no Baltic timber was allowed to be used in building such ships; and a ship was allowed to remain on the first class a shorter time in proportion to the larger quantity of Baltic timber used in it, so indifferent was the character of that timber (hear). But probably on a future occasion he (Mr. Liddell) should take the sense of the House on this question of the reduction of the duty on Baltic timber. He would now, therefore, turn to the question of our colonial trade. To begin with South Australia; the petition for the free importation of Australian corn was opposed last year by the Right Hon. Baronet, but, considering the very statesman-like views laid down by the Government on the Canada Corn Bill to be applicable to the case of Australia, he (Mr. Liddell) voted with the Hon. Member for Gateshead (Mr. Hutt). Now, with respect to South Australia, some account of the progress of cultivation in that colony had recently appeared in the public papers. [The Hon. Member here read the account, the substance of which appeared in the city article in *The Times* of the 13th inst.] The same causes would operate in this country, and if a remunerating price ceased to be obtained here, the cultivation of corn would diminish. Nothing he had as yet heard in that House reconciled him to the great change as regarded the colonial trade of this country. With respect to the general question, he had been extremely

anxious to learn what were the opinions of the Members of the Government with respect to the probable consequences of the proposed measure. Perhaps the Right Hon. Baronet would at some future period of the discussion give some explanation as to what was likely to be the average price of corn under the system of Free Trade. In making arrangements with tenants, &c., this was important to be known. He had heard a proposition from which he dissented, viz., that the trade in corn would, under the Free Trade system, be less liable to fluctuations. Such might be the case in ordinary times, but in bad seasons, and when there was a chance of rupture with foreign powers, he believed that the trade in corn might be exposed to greater fluctuations than had as yet been known. He tendered his thanks to the Hon. Member for Finsbury for the humane and wise recommendations contained in the latter part of his speech, though conveyed in caustic and rather spicy language, with respect to the law of settlement. He (Mr. Liddell) admitted that the new arrangement proposed in reference to that law would be a boon to agriculture, but it was much more than that—it was a boon to humanity (hear, hear). In times of manufacturing pressure he had seen, with pain and sorrow, miserable objects, men, wives, and families, wandering on the highways without a shed to lay their heads under, compelled to eke out a miserable subsistence by casual charity, and many, he feared, to starve. He trusted, therefore, that no consideration would induce the Right Hon. Baronet to give up that part of his measure. He had endeavoured to advocate the case of those parties who had placed their petition in his hands, and to place in its true light the position of the British shipowners. He still claimed for them and for the agricultural interest the maintenance of a system of protection. He did not pretend to say, after the declarations made by the Right Hon. Baronet and his colleagues, and by the Noble Lord opposite, that the present system of Corn Laws could any longer be looked to with confidence as to its permanency, but so long as he had a seat in that House—so long as his constituents should look to him as the faithful expositor of their opinions, he should endeavour to maintain the principle of protection, though in a modified form, and should consider it his duty, without bitterness or acrimony, but conscientiously and honestly, to oppose the proposed measure.

MR. HUTT said, the Hon. Member for North Durham (Mr. Liddell) had spoken strongly against the Government proposition, as tending to injure the English shipowners; now he (Mr. Hutt) had presented a petition from the shipowners of the Tyne and Wear, stating that their interest and welfare consisted in adopting the policy of the Right Hon. Gentleman. To them the proposal of the Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Liddell) to keep the materials for shipbuilding dear, would be anything but satisfactory. He trusted the House would take another and more liberal view of this question, and adopt the proposition of the Government. With respect to the general question, he had no inclination to approach one topic that had excited so much eloquence on the other side of the House. He should not go into the political conduct of the Right Hon. Baronet, but he must observe, if Hon. Gentlemen thought his conduct as a

Minister so deserving of censure and vituperation they would do well to adopt the suggestion of the Hon. Member for Finsbury (Mr. T. Duncombe), and bring it before the House by a motion of want of confidence. That would be more regular, and more suited to the practice of Parliament than mixing up with a question so momentous as the reform of their commercial policies, their personal grievances, and party disappointments (hear, hear). He had never believed the Right Hon. Baronet would continue to support the old system. In 1842, he (Mr. Hutt) had told a meeting of shipowners at Newcastle, that if they thought the Right Hon. Baronet would continue to maintain the old policy of prohibition and restriction they would be bitterly disappointed; and the speech of the Right Hon. Baronet on the sugar duties in 1841 had been quoted by the present Earl Grey, as a proof of an advance in scientific legislation, and as a declaration in favour of Free Trade. Those Gentlemen on the other side had also supported the Right Hon. Baronet in all the changes he had made; they supported the tariff of 1842, the Canada Corn Bill, the tariff of 1845; but when he came to the present measure, the necessary consequence of the former, they stopped short, talked of their virtue and their principle, and of the treachery of the Right Hon. Baronet. He (Mr. Hutt) thought the Right Hon. Baronet had much greater reason to complain of them. As to the argument that foreigners would only take gold in exchange for their supply of corn, and that this would be a great injury to this country, he denied both propositions; in the first instance, foreign countries would not require gold exclusively in exchange for corn; and in the second place, even if they did, such a state of things might exist with extreme advantage to their commerce. The only trade they carried on for many years with China was one of this kind, they sent dollars to Canton for teas and silks; could they say that the trade with China had been a disastrous one? It had been proved that it was the most successful trade the East India Company carried on. And this gold to which so much importance was attached, how did they become possessed of it? It did not grow in the Bank of England, nor did the Right Hon. Gentleman produce it in the Mint. It was procured by their commerce with other nations, and it represented their manufactures, the hardware of Sheffield, and the broad cloth of Leeds. Under the existing Corn Law, and on the occurrence of a scarcity, food was brought from abroad, and the commercial transactions of this country were interrupted by bullion being taken away in great quantities for payment to the foreigner. But what was the remedy for that? Why, to repeal the Corn Laws; to establish a settled intercourse and regular interchange of commodities between Great Britain and the Continent and America. If the natural course of trade was obstructed, such a calamity as the exportation of bullion must necessarily occur; but remove the bars to an unrestricted commerce, and the evil would be unknown. Hon. Gentlemen opposite called themselves Conservatives, and piqued themselves on the nomenclature, and he would call upon them to show some title to the name. There was nothing, they might depend upon it, so dangerous, nothing so revolutionary as bad laws. The measure proposed by the Government was, in the fullest and

completest sense of the word, a Conservative measure; and if Hon. Gentlemen meant to vindicate their claim to the appellation with which they dignified their party, they would give their unhesitating support to the wise, salutary, and comprehensive legislation about to be adopted (cheers).

CAPTAIN E. HARRIS regarded the scheme proposed by the Right Hon. Baronet with a deep regret, increased by a knowledge of the circumstances attending its introduction. In his (Captain Harris's) opinion, the change of which they had all been witnesses was not justifiable by anything that had occurred, still less by anything that was likely to occur. He did not speak with reference merely to party ties, but in reference to what was due from a Minister, in a British Parliament, to the British empire (cheers). He spoke without a shadow of personal hostility to the Right Hon. Baronet; and though there had been many bitter taunts levelled against that Right Hon. Gentleman, nothing he (Captain Harris) believed could have appeared to him so galling and so destructive as the painful panegyric of the Hon. Member for Durham (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had proposed a reduction of duty of from 20 to 10 per cent. upon manufactures generally, while he proposed that in three years the duty on corn should be entirely repealed. He thought this certainly was not acting justly by the agricultural interest. He (Captain Harris) had expressed himself in opposition to these ultra measures on the hustings two years ago, and he had since seen no reason to change his opinions.

MR. M. MILNES said, this was the second occasion, during a comparatively short Parliamentary period, on which he had seen the great subject of the Corn Laws brought before the House, encumbered with all the difficulties and dangers of a party discussion. It was, indeed, impossible to imagine two occasions more distinct than those of 1841 and 1846. On the first occasion this question was agitated as the last hope of a falling party; on the present occasion it seemed likely to cause the destruction of a vigorous and powerful party. In the former instance it was hardly possible to conceive any other principle upon which a Government could stand; in the latter it was scarcely possible to imagine a cause which could more certainly occasion the fall of a Government (hear, hear). It had been his object, during the time he had been in Parliament, to give the Hon. Gentlemen opposite, who had brought forward measures, of which he did not approve, full credit for the best and purest motives. He thought, therefore, it would scarcely be fair if he did not act with similar justice towards those with whom he had acted faithfully and disinterestedly for so many years. He was not inclined, then, to interpret the actions of the Government so harshly as some of his Hon. Friends had done. He ascribed much to incautious bias which they attributed to concert; he viewed much as accident which they regarded as strategy. But when they considered the peculiar nature of the law now under discussion, he thought they would find little reason for accusing any statesman of changing or modifying his opinions on the subject. He believed that although the Hon. Member for Cumberland might maintain the same opinions now that he held in 1815, very few Hon. Gentlemen would be found

who had mingled practically in public life, who had not in some degree modified their opinions on this question. When they saw that Earl Fitzwilliam, who supported the high duty in 1815, approved this measure; when they had seen Earl Spencer, who was not contented with the fixed duty of 10s. proposed by Mr. Ricardo, in 1822, but who insisted on its being raised to 20s., adopting similar principles; and when they had also seen that Mr. Ricardo, who was an able and enthusiastic advocate of the doctrine of Free Trade, had himself recommended a 10s. fixed duty, he thought they should not judge statesmen very harshly for modifying their opinions on this subject (hear). He did not think these peculiarities were confined to gentlemen who took one side of this question, for he believed that the opinions of the Hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne (Mr. Colquhoun), had undergone a modification in a different direction (a laugh). He was not sure, also, that the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli), if he had told them candidly the real state of his mind, would have informed them that he had always been so strong a Protectionist as he avowed himself at this time (laughter). He thought that in considering a question of this nature they should make every allowance for the difficulties which must be encountered by men who were intrusted with the responsible office of Government. It was not for him to estimate the grave responsibility of such a position; but every one who had heard the earnest expressions of the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) on this subject the other night, must be sensible of the weight of responsibility attaching to such an office, and must be ready to make allowance for the difficulties with which it was attended. It was for the House to decide whether statesmen should be allowed to modify their opinions, or whether the Government of the country should be continually cast from the hands of one party to another. But he could not regard the present measure in the light in which it was viewed by the Right Hon. Baronet (the President of the Board of Trade), as a legitimate deduction from former measures. There were two questions which the present Government, as a Government, were precluded from introducing, one was the secularising of the Irish church, the other the abolition of the Corn Laws. He, however, vindicated the right of Her Majesty's Government to act within the limits of perfect freedom, though, but for the circumstance of the Right Hon. Baronet having resigned his power to the hands of the Noble Lord, and the failure of the Noble Lord to form a Government, he should not have given the Right Honourable Baronet his support. He had ever regarded the Corn Law as an accidental, temporary accommodation: as a means, and an useful means, of educating the agriculturists of this country, so that they might be able to compete with foreigners (hear, hear). That education had been in a great measure completed, and when he looked at the miracles accomplished in agriculture, the cheapness of tile-draining, and other operations, he thought it was more proper to say that the Corn Law was approaching its natural termination, rather than to say that it should be continued. Having given to this subject his best consideration, he thought that the hopes of one side and the fears of the other were equally groundless. There was, however, an im-

portant problem not solved, namely, ~~tentative measures~~ <sup>to provide food</sup> and clothing. Whilst our manufactures were increasing <sup>at a prodigious</sup> extent, corn was ripening in abundance on the banks of the Mississippi. He did not think a great relief would be afforded by Repeal of the Corn Laws; but if a rapid and sudden change caused a difference in price between English and foreign corn, the loss must be distributed somewhere, between the landlord, the tenant, and the labourer. A great proportion of that loss, as his Hon. Friend had said, would fall upon the labourer. For his own part, however, he did not think that would prove true. If wages were to fall in proportion to the fall of corn, the very worst that could happen would be that the labourer would remain exactly where he was. It remained for others to prove that labour must fall in a greater proportion than the fall in wheat. He had imbibed the notion that there was far more proportion between the labourer of England and the labourer of the continent than was generally supposed. Political economists, in speaking upon the subject, omitted one grand point,—that was the physical view of the question. He understood from persons engaged in railroads on the continent, that they hardly gave half as much wages to a continental as to an English labourer. The fact was, that the continental labourer would gossip to any one, instead of going on with his work, and, if he had no auditor, he would talk to himself (a laugh). There was not so much fear of foreign competition as was supposed, and he believed that the English labourer would not be so very immediately a sufferer (hear, hear). The fact was, that the price of labour was already reduced to its *minimum*, and it was impossible to reduce it lower. The Hon. Gentleman concluded by expressing his conviction, that, although the landlords might lose something by the experiment, yet, if they were true to themselves, they might maintain a powerful and prosperous position amidst the fluctuating fortunes of this great and extending empire.

LORD INGESTRE moved the adjournment of the debate.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24.

The adjourned debate was resumed by

MR. M. J. O'CONNELL, who commenced by declaring that he had changed his opinion to some extent on the subject of the Corn Laws, in so far as he now thought their immediate and total abolition preferable to a fixed duty. His individual opinions, he admitted, were of little importance to any except himself and his constituents, but he was anxious to state the grounds upon which he had arrived at the conclusion in favour of a total and immediate repeal. In the month of October last a great alarm was occasioned in Ireland in consequence of the disease in the potato crops having shown itself extensively in that country; and he spoke in presence of those who could correct him if he exaggerated when he said, that a very general expectation prevailed that the ports would be immediately opened, and a free importation of foreign corn permitted, in order to meet the deficiency. Even in the ultra-protection papers not a word was said in opposition to this step. It was not until after it was known that the Ministers had considered the question of repeal of the Corn

Laws, that a cry was got up that the danger of famine had been exaggerated for party purposes. Even so moderate a politician as the Duke of Leinster did not escape the imputation. Nor did the Mansion-house committee; and many persons who were otherwise disposed to alleviate the distress of the people, were misled into the belief that it was not likely to be so great as was represented. One honourable exception he must record—that of the Protestant Clergy of the established church in Ireland. They had acted on the occasion as in fact they acted in all cases of difficulty and distress in Ireland, and from the purest motives, which among other reasons had contributed to secure for them the respect even of those most opposed to them (hear, hear). This active testimony of the clergy he took to be a most convincing proof that the danger was not exaggerated (hear). The question, however, was not what was the state of Ireland in November last, but what was it now? (hear). They had heard the statements of the Right Hon. Baronet, and also those of the Hon. and Learned Member for Cork, confirmed as they were by the Home Secretary. The Right Hon. the Recorder of Dublin told them, however, there was still gross exaggeration. If so, why did not he point out where it existed? That was his duty. But no; he shrunk from proof, as Hon. Gentlemen opposite did in many similar cases. Bold assertion, however, would not now pass, as it used to do with the people of this country, for proof (hear, hear). He (Mr. M. J. O'Connell), from the accounts he received from day to day, was led to believe that the danger was most imminent. It was no temporary emergency; it involved danger to future crops as well as the present ("hear, hear," from Sir R. Peel). But, even supposing that at the present time the disease was confined to the present crop, what security had they that the disease would not occur again? And why should the people of Ireland be confined to the use of an article of food, any failure of which was so dreadful, because it could not be detected till the plant was ready for digging; and as to which, as the disease was so new, there was no certain means of knowing its probable extent. The best way to guard against such a calamity was to abolish all restrictions on the general food of the people—to admit foreign corn; and it was for this reason that he should vote for the measure of the Government, although he could have wished the abolition immediate. The high price of bread and grain generally in Ireland was the reason why the people of Ireland were obliged to live on potatoes; fifty or sixty years ago it was not the case to the same extent, and oatmeal was almost as common a diet as in Scotland (hear). It was said, however, Repeal of the Corn Laws would injure the tenant-farmer and the labourers. As to the latter, he need only point to their present condition in Ireland. Look at their destitution. If abolition of the Corn Law was to lower, as was said, their condition as a class, he really did not see how such an effect could be produced in Ireland (hear, hear). On the other hand, an improved system of agriculture, it was admitted, would result from Repeal of the Corn Laws. That would necessitate increased employment of the labourer, which would effectually improve his condition. As to the alleged injury to the tenant-farmers, he should be very sorry to be

party to any measure, that would produce that result between food a great degree, represented that class himself. He had to a prodigious extent remind the House, that the profits of the farmer did not depend on high prices; that his profits might be high while prices were low; but that, on the other hand, it did not always follow that his profits would be high because prices were high. The real source of prosperity to the farmer was the prosperity of manufactures. The rapidly increasing population was also another source of his profit (cheers). Predictions of ruin were very common on the introduction of new commercial measures. Experience taught him to disregard them. Such prophecies were made as to the effect of the tariff of 1842 on Irish produce. But the facts contradicted them. At the fair of Ballinasloe, which might be taken as an illustration, a great increase had taken place. In 1841 the number of sheep sold there was 63,263; unsold, 12,600. The average price of the best wethers, £2 10s. In 1843 there were sold 62,726; unsold, 13,000; average price £2 5s. In 1844, sold, 61,000 (hear, hear); unsold, 8,500 (hear), average price £2 7s. In 1845, during which year there was the largest importation of foreign sheep, there were sold 66,861 sheep, and left unsold only 2,900, while the average price was £2 13s. With such an example before them, he hoped the farmers of Ireland would not again allow themselves to be run away with by a panic on this subject. He had another instance of the fallaciousness of such prophecies of evil. The Right Hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Labouchere), in 1840, brought in a bill to allow foreign flour to be introduced into Ireland. Immediately ruin to the millers was at once prophesied by Sir J. E. Tennant. But in 1842 flour was admitted. What was the shape the predicted ruin took? In 1842 the quantity of flour imported into England from Ireland was 314,000 cwt.; in 1843 (after the ruin commenced), it increased to 733,000 cwt.; in 1844, to 839,000 cwt.; and in 1845, this ruined interest imported into England of flour no less than 1,421,000 cwt. (hear, hear). He believed similar results would follow the present measure. He considered the measure of Government a just and righteous measure in itself; and he would give it not a lukewarm and grudging, but a most cordial support.

COLONEL CONOLLY begged to say that the accounts he had received from the county which he represented (Donegal), and also from the county of Kildare, where he formerly resided, confirmed the statement of the Right Hon. the Member for the University of Dublin (Mr. Shaw), that the accounts of the potato disease had been exaggerated. By no means could he connect the measure before the House with the deficiency in the Irish potato crop. The supply could not last beyond four months; the measure before the House could not come into operation for three years. It bore very hardly on Ireland, and would meet with his utmost resistance. He deplored that the Government should have introduced any measure which had a tendency to discourage the only means Ireland possessed of giving employment to the people; he contended it would give the supply of the English market to rival, perhaps to hostile countries; he should give it his opposition.

LORD INGESTRE apologised for trespassing on the House upon a

an question of such importance; but as many with whom he generally acted had gone over to the enemy, he felt it necessary for every man in those days of political apostacy openly to avow his opinions (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Secretary for the Home Department had, in what he must call an extraordinary speech on a former night, adduced several tests of the sincerity of his change of opinion. He (Lord Ingestre) had never doubted that sincerity, although he had no abandonment of principle to account for; yet perhaps he might be allowed to state one circumstance as a proof of the sincerity of the opinions he entertained. He believed it was well known that a short time since a noble relative of his (Earl Talbot) had written a letter stating his opinion of the present policy. That letter had been made a good deal of, because the Noble Lord had for many years paid great attention to the science of agriculture, and his opinion was entitled to every weight and consideration (hear, hear). Knowing that that opinion was not one of recent date, like those avowed lately in that House, on very short notice, but one that had been entertained by that noble individual for many years, he would state to what extent he thought that opinion went. He had often heard his noble relative say he believed the energy of Englishmen to be of so indomitable and persevering a character that, come what difficulties there might, they would be able to surmount them (hear, hear). He believed that to be the extent of the opinion he entertained; he would state, however, that his noble relative would feel it his duty to support the measure proposed to Parliament (hear, hear). In the early part of the debate he had been much struck by an observation of the Right Hon. Secretary at War, that this was not a question of principle, but purely a fiscal and commercial question (hear, hear). He would ask, what question could be more a question of principle than this, on which the Parliament was chosen? At the last election, he (Lord Ingestre) did not say a word about the Corn Laws, but still he could not think of breaking what had been called the "honourable understanding" between him and his constituents (hear, hear). Had he been struck by any remarkable conversion, he should have felt bound to have placed his seat at the disposal of his constituents (cheers). The Right Hon. Baronet, in one of the eloquent and powerful speeches he had made on this subject, had spoken of the necessity of making a final adjustment of this question. It seemed to him that as some ladies had a fancy for match-making, so the Right Hon. Baronet had a fancy for making final adjustments (laughter). What was it to be? He warned the Government if it gave way to its alarm and its fears of those who composed the League, that it would be dragged from one point to another till there would be nothing left. He did not mean to go into all the commercial questions, but they heard a great deal about Free Trade; it was dinned into the ears of the Legislature, and forced by League papers to their firesides. To Free Trade, in its proper sense, he had no objection; but what was Free Trade? According to some Hon. Gentlemen on that side, and according to many other Hon. Gentlemen on the opposite side of the House, it was an interchange unfettered by commercial restrictions of all the commodities furnished by different nations. There was a

palpable fallacy in that manner of defining Free Trade, when correctly understood, meant an exchange between two countries—one giving what the other did not produce, and taking from that other that which it did not itself produce. To go abroad for that which they themselves were enabled to furnish, neglecting the home interest, was not Free Trade, and a policy more calculated than any other which could be adopted to bring destruction upon those classes of the community from whom former protection was about to be withdrawn, and who were about to be recklessly exposed to the unchecked competition of the whole world. They now demanded a one-sided Free Trade, and he would therefore have called the late Hon. and gallant Member for Westminster if he had been present, as he (Captain Rous) was a great handicapper, to handicap a different stakes, and then they would all start fair (hear). Hon. Gentlemen on that side of the House had been called monopolists; he did not understand the meaning of that word “monopolists,” for they did not advocate protection on agricultural grounds alone, they looked to the interests of every class; and he could not well conceive how that could be termed a monopoly which was granted to four-fifths of the people (hear). By taking away that proper and most necessary protection, they would destroy the home market—a market said by Adam Smith to be worth “all the others put together;” and the inevitable consequence of such a course would be the severing of every bond which, by common interest, held society together. The present question had been called a landlord’s question; that was a calumny; it was only a landlord’s question insomuch that it was a question affecting the entire community. Did it not stand to reason, that on rents being reduced, as reduced they would be, the means of the wealthier classes to purchase luxuries would be diminished, and that, consequently, the manufacturers engaged in the production of those luxuries would be injured? The measure proposed to the House would be a ruinous measure to Ireland: it would take away from that country their best market, viz.—England; and, as having such a tendency he most strongly objected to it. It was a measure which, in an equal degree, would deprive our colonies, and especially Canada, of the advantages recently accorded to them; would place them even in a worse position than countries with whom we had no connexion and no link; and on these grounds also he objected to it. The Right Hon. Baronet had called upon them to dismiss all party considerations; he did not believe the Right Hon. Bart., whom he had long publicly and privately known, could be actuated by any but the most patriotic motives; but he would warn that Right Hon. Gentleman that if any attempt were made to govern this country without a party it would be a most signal failure (hear, hear). When he spoke of a party, he meant not the paltry section of the House, but a great national body; and in such a sense, parties were constitutionally necessary to the existence of Governments (hear, hear). In bringing his remarks to a close, the Noble Lord, amid general laughter, took from his pockets a quantity of new potatoes, of a very fine quality, grown, he stated, from the eyes of diseased potatoes, and which he produced for the examination of any Hon. Member curious on the subject, in order to show the fallacious-

the statement that good potatoes could not be obtained from  
of the diseased roots.

Mr. TRELAWNY was surprised at the extraordinary contrast between  
letter of the Noble Lord the Member for Newark (Lord J.  
Gerrard), and his recent speech. From reading that letter he con-  
sidered the Noble Lord would support the Government, or, if he did  
(Lord J. Gerrard), his only reason for opposing the Government would seem to be  
because he agreed with it (a laugh). He believed the Noble Lord  
possessed considerable ability; yet his conduct was difficult to recon-  
cile with these qualities. He went in his letter so far as to argue  
that the Right Hon. Baronet ought to have opened the ports even  
in the autumn, when the danger was far less imminent; and yet now  
he was coolly going to vote that the consideration of these pressing  
matters should be put off till that day six months (hear). And why?  
Because he had some objections to the political morality of a parti-  
cular individual, whose fault—if it were one—was to be the cause of  
the sufferings of millions of men (hear). The Hon. Member for  
Shrewsbury had certainly made a clever speech. He made an obser-  
vation which the members of the Free Trade party must candidly  
admit to be just—namely, that while the League had been for years pro-  
fessing to educate the masses, it had really been educating itself (hear).  
Yes; but it was educated at last. The Hon. Member had said that  
they had constantly been shifting their ground. True; but so had  
the Protectionists. Feeling that it would not do any longer to fight  
under so exclusive a banner as that of Protection to Agriculture,  
they had chosen a new one in Protection to Native Industry. But  
how could native industry be protected in the case of articles already  
competing, in spite of heavy duties, with foreign goods and foreign  
markets? A bounty on exports would be necessary, if Protectionists  
would be consistent. Were they prepared for that? and if all were  
protected, what good was protection? The fact was, the Hon.  
Member's argument failed, as he would do as a commercial Minister.  
Having so thoroughly and so enviably succeeded in a different line,  
it was a pity to see him frittering away his reputation in aspiring to  
be a statesman (laughter). Hon. Members on the Protectionist side  
were a little unfair towards the Government on the subject of their  
change of opinion. They wholly forgot the tremendous responsibi-  
lity which any body of men must lie under who assumed to feed  
24,000,000 of men. It was easy for those who were out of office—  
who had none of its cares and anxieties—who were not responsible  
for the preservation of internal peace—to talk loudly about principle,  
and the obligation of a rigid adherence to it. He knew it was de-  
nied that rents were the object of the Corn Law; but if it were said  
that food for the people was its real end, then how could men be  
induced to believe that the best method of keeping corn in was to  
pass a law to keep it out? This kind of argument would no longer  
do in towns, however it might go down with farmers' clubs and la-  
bourers' friend societies. In conclusion he should only add, that he  
should support the Government, but protesting against the incom-  
pleteness and want of finality of the measure they proposed (cheers).

MR. PACKE said, though he had had the honour of being a  
Member of the House for many years, he was not in the habit of

taking a part in the debates ; but upon this occasion he could not give a silent vote. It was with very great pain that he was obliged to differ from an Administration to which he had, for a length of time, given his warmest and firmest support. He did not assert that the Right Hon. Baronet had any impure motive ; he believed that he acted from the sincerest conviction ; but he thought at the same time that his course was ruinous to the country. If he understood the principles on that, the Protectionist side, it was an adherence to fixed principles (hear, hear) ; whereas the other side advocated ever varying principles. He had been told that the policy of this measure was based upon public opinion ; that they ought not to rake up old speeches and ransack *Hansard*. This might do very well for the other side, who were always changing their opinions, but it was only by reference to past speeches that consistency of principle could be tried. [The Hon. Member then read a variety of extracts from the past speeches of Sir R. Peel and other Members of the Government.] From the speeches and the declarations of the Right Hon. Baronet, nothing could be more clear than that the last dissolution of Parliament was a dissolution upon the Corn Laws ; and now he would request the House for a moment to review the grounds upon which the Right Hon. Baronet had brought forward the present propositions. First, there was the failure of the potato crop. But that was a subject so threadbare that not another word need be said with respect to it. Next, there was the prosperity of the last three years. Now, that was a reason which made quite the other way. It was well known that the wages of labour did not depend upon the prices of corn. If we had been prosperous for the last three years, that was an excellent reason for going on in the course out of which our prosperity had arisen. In the third place, it was said that this measure was introduced for the purpose of reconciling differences amongst all classes of her Majesty's subjects. He feared, however, that the effect of the intended change would be to inflame those differences beyond all previous example ; and as to what were called the compensation clauses, he thought them quite illusory.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER (Right Hon. H. Goulburn) said—In addressing to the House the very few observations which I think it necessary to make upon this occasion, I think that I must begin with an opening similar to that which formed the opening of those speeches which have been delivered by most of the Hon. Members who have taken a part in the discussion of the present question. I find it necessary to begin by saying, that at this period of so protracted a debate I cannot expect to add anything to the facts and reasonings which have been already laid before the House on this interesting and momentous question. I shall therefore feel it my duty not to claim very much of your attention ; and I shall endeavour to confine the observations which it will be necessary for me to make within as narrow limits as it is possible for me to assign them. As to the more prominent merits of the question, it appears to me quite unnecessary that I should say much after the great ability with which it has been opened by my Right Hon. Friend at the head of the Government, and after the manner in which it was yesterday evening argued by my Right Hon. Friend the Vice-



President of the Board of Trade, who, in the course of his speech, left no part of the subject untouched, nor any argument of his opponents unrefuted (cries of "oh, oh," and "hear, hear"). My Right Hon. Friend established beyond the remotest possibility of contradiction, that the progress which we had made, and were making, towards the removal of restrictions must be regarded as successful,—that all the relaxations which we adopted had in every instance been attended with benefits, and produced results favourable to the comfort and happiness of the community. The question now before us is one which appears to me to lie within a very narrow compass. It is, whether we shall continue to make progress in the course we have for years adopted in the relaxation of protective duties, or whether we shall not remain as we are, but are to retrograde from the course we have hitherto taken? I know that the present proposals are deplored by many Hon. Gentlemen who have hitherto supported the government in the course they have pursued, but who maintain that we have now arrived at that particular point at which we ought not to consent to the withdrawal of that amount of protection to native industry which it is essential should remain; because they say what we have already done is judicious and just, and must at all times hereafter be maintained intact. When I consider the arguments stated by my Hon. Friends near me; when I hear one declare that the regulations with respect to corn ought to be immediately suspended, and that sentiment is cheered as if Hon. Gentlemen acquiesced in that suggestion; when I hear others declare that the Corn Laws ought to be modified in such particulars as to meet the inconveniences which resulted from them in their present shape; when I find some going a step further, and others not so far, upon this particular question, I think it will be very difficult to account for the reasons why they resist as they have resisted the motion now before the House (hear, hear). What is the course which they recommend us to pursue? I could have understood them if they had proposed a modification of the present Corn Laws in committee, or if they had pursued such a course that these laws might be altered; but the course they have taken is to refuse all consideration of these laws; they have refused as well to consider the suspension as the abrogation of the Corn Laws. They refuse to take any step; they require that they shall remain as they are, without any remedy for the existing evils, which they admit to be great, and without any remedy for future evils, which some admit and others deny, and without allowing any progress which may be expedient for the welfare of the country. In support of the view which the Government take of this question we have the appearance, and I believe we have also the opinion of the country, in favour of the success which experience has shown in the progress we have hitherto made in the same course. This success has been attempted to be denied by Hon. Gentlemen, and figures and calculations have been used which have utterly failed to refute it. Those figures and calculations have been, in my opinion, completely overturned by my Right Hon. Friend the Vice-President of the Board of Trade (hear, hear). He has stated that there is no article affected by the reductions which have been hitherto made which have shown anything

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otherwise than an increased activity of trade, and an increase in production ("no, no"! ). One Hon. Gentleman thought he had found an article which did not shew this increase, and he referred to spelter (laughter), and my Right Hon. Friend the Vice-President of the Board of Trade settled spelter as easily as he did any other article (cheers and cries of "no, no"). By the introduction of that article he proved that we have introduced an entirely new branch of industry. This may be no proof of success in the opinion of my Hon. Friends, but it proves that we have given increased means for employment in this country. Now my Hon. Friend who spoke yesterday (Mr. Liddell) has thought it necessary to complain of the hardship which a recurrence to Free Trade is likely to inflict on the shipping interests (hear, hear). We are told that, whatever effect it might have on other interests, the shipping interest is deeply interested in the protection to native industry; and he did not seem to admit that this interest had derived any benefit from the relaxation which has hitherto taken place, or that it could look to any advantage from the increased freedom of commerce. Now I say that, of all the opposition from the commercial interests, the opposition of the shipping interest is the one which most excites my surprise (cheers). I should have thought that a measure such as that before the House, which will lead to a great and immediate improvement and extension of our imports and exports, would have suggested itself to the mind of any man as calculated to increase the means by which these imports and exports are to be brought; that in proportion as our commerce increased so will the shipping interests be benefited, and that they will receive those advantages which, as my Gallant Friend the Member for Donegal, being the son of a sailor, naturally wished to see,—an extended commerce in time of peace, and a means of offence and defence in the event of a war. Let me call, then, the attention of the House to the effect produced upon the shipping interests of this country since the period to which the Hon. Gentleman referred—1842. In 1842 the number of vessels engaged in the foreign trade, exclusive of the coasting and the Irish trade, was 2,680,838 tons, and in the year 1845 the number of tons was 3,669,853, being an increase within this particular and limited period, of 1,000,000 of tons (a cry of—"the Chinese trade"). Making every allowance for the increase of the Chinese trade and every other circumstance, I think that with every deduction, there will be found to be a large increase in the tonnage ("and the coal," from an Hon. Member). Now my Hon. Friend the Member for Durham particularly insisted on the injurious effect which has been effected, and which is likely to result from the alteration already made and now contemplated on the subject of the timber duties, and he has enlarged on the injury to accrue to the colonies from the alteration of this particular duty. In the first place, let him observe the quantity of British shipping employed in the Baltic trade for the few years last past. In 1843 the number of British vessels employed in this trade was 3,519, with a tonnage of 613,809 tons, and in 1844 the number of vessels employed was 4,424, with a tonnage of 818,440 tons. And therefore, when they say the removal of protection from timber has thrown into the hands of the foreigner a greater extent of trade than you

yourselves have derived from the same source, I am perfectly prepared to admit that that is a necessary consequence of the navigation laws themselves, which permit foreigners to introduce into this country the produce of their own country in ships of their own nation; and there is another reason for the increase of foreign tonnage in the Baltic, which the measure now before the House is well calculated to remove; and if my Hon. Friend deems it expedient to give encouragement to British shipping trading to the Baltic, I know no way in which he can do that more effectually than in passing this measure (hear, hear); for if my Hon. Friend had looked at the proportion of ships employed in the conveyance of corn under the present system of the Corn Laws, when the demand for corn being sudden, the corn sent over must be freighted in ships that are on the spot at the time; and if he looked at the disproportion in that particular branch of trade which exists between foreign and British ships, he would have seen that he could have done nothing which would give a greater chance of employment to British shipping, whose interests he advocates, than by supporting the measure now on the table of the House (hear, hear). It appears by a return which has been laid before this House, that of corn-laden ships passing through the Sound in 1842, 1,138 were foreign, whilst 501 only were British. The disproportion, therefore, exceeds that which prevailed in former years of the trade, and we must look for the cause of it to what I have stated to the House. If, then, my Hon. Friend wishes to restore the prosperity of the British shipping, let him join with us in doing that which will give greater commercial intercourse with those particular ports, in making those articles which now are only suddenly sent over regular articles of trade, and his object will be accomplished. My Hon. Friend, however, says the diminution of the duty on Baltic timber will injure the trade with our colonies, which are the object of our greatest care; but my Hon. Friend falls into an error not uncommon with those who argue strongly in favour of protection with respect to colonial produce. They maintain that those measures which do not produce an advantage on the one side produce a disadvantage on the other; whereas the converse is true; for, by increasing the introduction of one commodity into the country you create for other articles a demand which tends to augment the quantity brought in. Now, your Baltic trade has increased; but what is the case in the British North American colonies? Has the shipping decreased? In 1842 the number of ships cleared out was 1,550; in 1844 it had increased to 2,284: the tonnage in the former case being 541,000, in the latter 789,000. Can there be more conclusive evidence that the reduction of duty upon a foreign commodity has not affected your colonial trade, and has not injured the British shipowner in any material degree? (hear, hear). But this does not rest on my statement. There was a committee last year in which this very question incidentally arose, and Mr. Chapman, a gentleman of great knowledge and of extensive interest in the trade of shipping, then stated the benefits which the shipping interests had derived from the operation of the tariff, of which the success was doubted at the time it passed. He was asked,—“Is it not the fact

that it is only since freights were not remunerative that the attention of shipowners has been directed to obtaining relief from any quarter they could?"—and he said, "The fact is, that until Sir Robert Peel, by the new tariff, allowed us to get foreign provisions out of bond, the competition we have to maintain against foreigners was most unfair; that made a difference of 30 per cent. upon those provisions at once. Previously it was like a penalty hanging over us, and a premium to the foreigner." And yet, if there were one point upon which more anxiety was expressed in particular quarters than another, it was those additional provisions which would be brought into competition with your produce; but which had, as it appeared, been, in fact, so unfavourable to British trade as to give to the foreigner a premium of 30 per cent. Mr. Chapman was then asked,—"Has that relaxation of the law by which vessels going abroad can provision out of bond been very useful to the shipping?—Of the greatest possible consequence; it makes just the difference, I believe, between a loss or no loss upon sailing the ship, as they are obliged to do, because they are compelled to have apprentices, and the apprentices must be maintained; and the real fact is, that they often send ships to sea only to save themselves being out of pocket." His evidence was further continued, and he was asked,—"Are we to understand from what you have stated, and from the trade in guano, the shipping have not suffered so much as they did the three preceding years?" His answer was—"Yes, because the freights are becoming better all over the world. There is one exception, I believe. In the Canada trade they got from 30s. to 38s. and 40s.; that has been the rise since last year." And he says—"If you will give me 38s. a-load for yellow pine for 10 years to come I will contract to supply you with any amount of tonnage." Therefore my Hon. Friend's statement, as one of those affected by the late change, and as likely to be affected by the future change, proceeds only upon the statement of individuals who, embarking in the shipping trade when it was more costly than at present, find it difficult to derive that return for their capital which they have a right to expect; and I admit that there were shipowners at the time of the reduction of duty upon Baltic timber upon whom it necessarily had an injurious effect. Ships built before the reduction were built at an enormously enhanced expense, in consequence of the duty on timber, necessarily imposed upon them; and though my Hon. Friend said that that statement was erroneous, and that the Baltic timber was required for the making of foreign ships, my Hon. Friend may recollect that the duty on Baltic timber enhanced in precisely the same proportion the value and price of British oak with which ships were built, and did indirectly add to the price of building ships nearly or exactly to the same extent as if built from timber brought also from the Baltic (hear). I think, therefore, it is quite clear that gentlemen who have built ships of those expensive materials find it difficult to compete with those who have built ships since then of cheaper materials. But, if I may compare great things with small, they stand precisely in the situation of those innkeepers on the north road, who are ruined because the turnpike roads no longer bring customers to their houses, the railways affording a better mode of conveyance. But,

says another Hon. Friend, "why, what an injury you are about to commit on Canada, whom you patronized two sessions ago, and to whom you gave the advantage of being considered on the same footing as the mother country!" But she has no right to complain that you are now going to admit foreign corn in competition with the corn of Canada. I will stand up as high as any man for the purpose of preserving our colonial connexion and of doing for the colonies everything that is just, equitable, and right, and likely to conduce to their ultimate benefit; but if in dealing with the colonies you place their produce on the same footing as the produce of your own country, they have no right to complain, if for the general benefit, you place in competition with them the same foreign commodities which you place in competition with those of your own country, and therefore, if they complain that their advantages are diminished, my answer is, "you stand on the same footing as the mother country; you share her advantages, and you must also share the inconveniences, if they exist, with her, but you have no right to complain." Now, it has been a favourite argument with Honourable Gentlemen in discussing this question, and it is always a favourite mode of dealing with a subject when arguments cannot be readily adduced against it, to draw a picture of the extravagant consequences likely to result from it. We have been told, therefore, that if Free Trade be permitted to one article, it must be the same to all; that there should be no duty on tea, tobacco, or other articles, because they say that that interferes with the course of Free Trade. But I beg to state that, in adopting those principles of Free Trade which are promulgated by the Government, I do not adopt extreme opinions either on the one side or the other. I admit that all duties, whether they be raised for taxation or otherwise, are impediments to trade, and I admit that, in many instances, they may indirectly operate as Protection; for it is impossible, under any financial system, however carefully regulated, to avoid the operation of a revenue duty in some instances being a duty of Protection; and therefore, when I advocate Free Trade, I put in my claim decidedly to retain those duties which are essential for revenue purposes, to retain those restrictive duties which are essential for preserving public morals (hear, hear), and to retain those duties which may be necessary occasionally for the public safety (hear, hear). And in doing so, I do not conceive that I am in the least degree departing from the legitimate application of the principles of Free Trade to a society constituted as ours is; but I view freedom of trade in the same light as I view civil liberty. The liberty of the subject must necessarily be under some restraint if he continues to live in such a state of society as ours; but you are not to take any restriction which may be imposed upon that liberty as the law by which your conduct is to be regulated. It is an exception from the general rule which it may be desirable to adopt, and you may find it indispensably necessary to maintain it upon one of the grounds I have stated--either for revenue or national safety, or, what is more important than all, for the purpose of national morality (hear). The greater part of the argument on the present question has turned upon the probable effects the Repeal of the Corn

Laws is likely to have upon the agricultural interest. Hon. Gentlemen have supposed that by introducing competition with the agriculture of this country we are likely to be overwhelmed with foreign produce, and that the agriculturist is likely to lose his fair reward. We have heard various points argued in the course of this debate, but I will content myself merely with calling the attention of the House to two cases in which we have made a fair trial of what is the effect of restriction upon agriculture, and what is the effect of introducing competition with respect to it, and from the results of these two experiments which history furnishes, I can show in the strongest manner the advantages which competition produces to countries which freely adopt it. It is, perhaps, known to the House, that a considerable number of years since, as long ago as the reign of Charles II., the agricultural interest of this country entertained very similar opinions to those which have been professed by individuals connected with that interest at the present moment, and thought they were deeply affected by the importation of produce which came into competition with their own. At that time the object of alarm was Ireland (hear, hear). It was thought that Ireland, where labour was cheap, the soil fertile, the climate favourable, and where there was every inducement to exertion, might by competition overwhelm the industry of this country, and lead to the ruin of the agriculturist (hear); and the Parliament of that day thought fit to pass a law for promoting the importation of cattle from Ireland (hear, hear). Now, it was curious to observe what arguments were used at that period when this disposition prevailed to give to this country the entire monopoly of cattle. History tells us, as to the proceedings in the House of Commons, "There was a great rumour, rather than a complaint, of the great damage the kingdom sustained from the importation of Irish cattle, which were bred there for nothing ("hear," and a laugh), and transported for little, and might well undersell all the cattle here; and hence the breed of cattle would be totally given over, and thereby the land yield no rent proportionably to what it ever had done, and that this could only be remedied by a very strict act of Parliament to forbid the importation." However, there were some Members of the agricultural interest who did not concur in those views, for Lord Clarendon tells us,—“Very many Members of several counties desired that their counties might not undergo any damage for the benefit of other individual places. They professed that their counties had no land bad enough to breed, and that their great traffic consisted in buying the cattle, making them fat, and upon this they paid their rent, and this appeared to be the case of many counties in England.” But the voices of those gentlemen had little weight in the House of Commons. The bill was carried with almost universal assent, and taken up to the House of Lords, and the House shall hear the reception it met with in the Upper House:—“In the Lords, a marvellous keen resolution appeared to use all expedition in passing it, and, by a singular coincidence, the Duke of Buckingham appeared at the head of those who favoured the bill with a marvellous concernment, and at the time appointed for the debate of it, contrary to his custom of

coming into the House, indeed, of not rising till eleven o'clock, and seldom staying above a quarter of an hour, except upon some business he concerned himself in, he was always present from the first thing in the morning and stayed till the last at night, for the debate often held from the morning till four o'clock in the afternoon, and sometimes till candles were brought in (laughter). It was urged that, if the bill did not pass, all the rents in Ireland would rise in a vast proportion, and those in England fall as much." In consequence of this statement two Noble Lords, one in England and the other in Ireland, fought a duel by way of settling the question (laughter). And seven years afterwards a distinguished man in this country, an ancestor of the Noble Lord whom I see opposite—Sir W. Temple—in writing a letter to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland in 1673, when this law, which had been pressed forward so anxiously, had been in operation seven years, said—"When the passage is open land will be turned most to feed cattle; when shut, to sheep, as it is at present; though I am of opinion it cannot last, because this act seems to have been carried on rather by the interest of particular counties in England than by that of the whole, which, in my opinion, must evidently be a loser by it. For first, the freight of all cattle that are brought over, being in English vessels, was so much clear gain to England. The trade of hides and tallow, or else of leather, was mightily advanced in England. Where the Irish sell, there will they be sure to buy too, and all the foreign merchandise which they had before from Bristol, Chester, and London, they will have in time from Rouen, Amsterdam, Lisbon, and the Straits. As for the cause of the decay of rents in England which was made the occasion of that act, that proceeded not from the importation of Irish cattle. Besides, the rents have been far from increasing since." The bill, therefore, which was, by excluding the importation of cattle from Ireland, to have kept up the rents of England, is proved, after seven years' experience, by one most capable to judge—by a man of the most admirable judgment and most conversant with the affairs of England and Ireland, to have failed in its object, and to have caused rather a diminution in agricultural produce; but there is a period in later times which shows, on the contrary, that the admission of competition is essential to the prosperity of agriculture. It is perfectly well known, that up to the period of the union Ireland was, as to the importation of corn into this country, treated as a foreign country. In 1800 and 1801 there were 3,000 quarters of Irish corn imported in the one year, and 2,500 in the other, but after the Union, and freedom was entirely established between Ireland and this country, the corn of Ireland was at once admitted to the markets of this country in perfect competition with corn grown by the agriculturists here; and we must bear in mind that at that particular period the population of England amounted to something short of 11,000,000 souls, and the quantity of corn raised in England was proportionate to the population which at that time existed in it. Ireland rapidly sent large quantities of corn here for consumption of the people here, and in the course of a very few years she imported 250,000 quarters per annum, but the population had risen gradually, and ultimately the corn sent annually

to England from Ireland amounted to 3,000,000 or 4,000,000 quarters. Why, if there were any force in the arguments that agriculture would be ruined by the importation of corn from countries where labour is cheap, the land fertile, and where there is great room for improvement,—why had they not a right, as applied to the admission into England at that period of corn from Ireland, which enjoyed all those peculiar advantages? and if England, with a population of 11,000,000, could sustain the admission to that extent of corn from Ireland, not only without injury, but, as I will show you, to the great improvement of its own agriculture,—what fear have we now, when the population of the united kingdom amounts to 27,000,000, that any practical importation from abroad can exceed, in proportion to the population, the quantity that we previously admitted from Ireland, or can produce an effect upon the agriculture of this country more prejudicial or less beneficial than that which the Irish importation has produced? It is from the time of the Union that we may date our improvements in agriculture, and the stimulus that has been given to British industry. In the year subsequent to the admission of Irish corn a greater number of enclosure bills were introduced into this House than at any previous or subsequent period. The gentlemen of England immediately paid great attention to the improvement of agriculture, and to the application of science to its improvement. We find that the price of corn in England was not reduced by the importations that took place from Ireland, but that agricultural prosperity was growing from year to year. If, therefore, as I said before, upon the limited field into which these large importations of Irish corn were introduced, you find no sensible effect to the injury of the agriculture of this country, that competition led to industry and permanent improvement, how can you argue that a small introduction of corn from the continent, more limited in amount in proportion to the present population, will produce those disastrous effects which the Hon. Gentlemen on my right are so fond of predicting? (hear, hear). Another circumstance with respect to the agriculture of the two countries strikes me as of importance. I think no man present, whatever his attachment to the sister country may be, will deny that the agriculture of that country, as compared with the agriculture of this country, is deficient in the extreme. Yet it is argued that competition has acted injuriously upon England. Such, however, is not the case. From the want of competition agriculture in Ireland has remained in much the same state that it was in when permission was agitated for the introduction of its corn into the English market; so that competition has proved prejudicial to Ireland, as it has been beneficial to England. What I have said of competition elsewhere must, I think, satisfy my Hon. Friend that by the application of the same principles to the sister country the same effects might be expected; and that, so far from reducing the value of land and the amount of employment for the poor, a stimulus will be created there by the increased demand which an extended intercourse with foreign countries will necessarily give. It will produce there, as in England, greater employment in agriculture, and the establishment of manufactories to meet the wants of the people. It has

been said, and said truly, by my Hon. Friend, that the home market is the most valuable market. But the very object and effect of the proposed change is to enhance that market; and, so far from the agriculturist being influenced by jealousy, he is, in my view of the question, of all men the individual who should most rejoice in that extension of commercial intercourse which, adding to the wealth of the general body of the community, gives to the richest consumer the produce he has to sell (hear). I will confine myself to another topic which has formed a larger portion of this debate than any other; I mean those different arguments with respect to the inconsistency of public men (loud cries of "hear, hear," from Mr. Ferrand and other Hon. Gentlemen near him). They have formed the main staple of the arguments of Hon. Gentlemen; and whenever the word has been used, it has never failed to elicit their cheers ("hear, hear," from the same quarter). I am as strong an advocate for consistency as any man (ironical cheers and laughter). I have said it (renewed laughter). But, Sir, shall I be told that consistency consists in adhering to a particular line upon a subject which is subject to variation with the altered state of society from time to time? (hear, hear.) Am I to be told that if I in one particular year adopt a measure and give my assent to it, because at the time I believe it to be a proper one, I then am not at any subsequent period, whatever alteration may take place in the circumstances of the country, in the wants of the population, in the deficiency of their means of being fed, at liberty to depart from the line which I have already supported? (hear, hear). I say you place consistency on a ground which is not tenable, and, so far from supporting the consistency of public men, you do more, by placing it on a wrong basis, to damage it than otherwise (laughter among the Protectionists, followed by cheers and counter-cheers). Who is there among the Hon. Gentlemen who has been consistent upon the Corn Law? (hear, hear). I know of no public man for many years past, not excepting Mr. Huskisson, Lord Brougham, and Lord Liverpool, who has not entertained different opinions at different times (hear, hear). And now let me ask, are the Hon. Gentlemen on my right agreed upon the question? Are they prepared to maintain the principle that constancy and adherence to a particular line are to be the rule by which the virtue of public men is to be tested? (hear.) Why, even the Hon. Member for Northamptonshire, says, "I never imagined that these laws would be permanent." He admits that the time may come when they may be changed. I would ask my Hon. Friend, when is the time at which he thinks that his constancy is to be changed? When are these Corn Laws to be altered or abrogated, as he thinks they must be? (hear, hear.) When a gentleman tells me that he does not imagine certain duties are to be permanent, it is clear that he does contemplate a change at some time or other (hear, hear). I ask him, then, to show me the period when he will be prepared to advocate the repeal of the duty on corn? (hear, hear). Will he tell me the time when that repeal can be effected with greater or less interest to society at large, or with greater advantage to the general body of the community? Or will he show the time when resistance to the Repeal of the Corn Law can be less

effectively maintained or lead to less dangerous consequences? (hear, hear.) If he can, then it will become merely a question of time. I think the present the most important period for us to lay hold of for the purpose. We have a period when there is great distress from the failure of a particular crop; we are arrived at a moment when not only do we contemplate the effects of the late failure of the potato crop, but we look forward to the consequences of a failure in future years, probably leading to the substitution of a diet of corn instead of that root. For although the Noble Lord the Member for Staffordshire has very kindly advertised the potatoes grown by Mr. Chapman in his garden at Isleworth, from diseased Irish potatoes, I must say that more extensive experiments have been made by gardeners, scientific men, and others, and the results have been anything but satisfactory. I have, Sir, accounts from America, where this disease has prevailed for three consecutive years. It was observed in the first instance in a slight degree. In the second year it came on again with aggravated force. In this year in which we are now speaking the destruction of the crop in North America is equal to that in many parts of Ireland. What has happened in other countries may also happen in this; and in the time of the continuation of this disease, is it not prudent and wise to take the earliest opportunity for providing increased provision for the wants of the people? (hear, hear). It is not only that the disease prevails in England and in Ireland, but there is the apprehension of a subsequent prevalence of the disease in other countries, and if it should continue there will be a demand for corn in those countries beyond that of the present moment, and during the same period that we shall have an increased demand also; and the probability will rather be that we shall not get that supply which we shall necessarily require under any circumstances, than that we shall have the inundation of corn which some Hon. Gentlemen fear (hear, hear). Has the House ever considered the situation in which this country stands at this moment in regard to the extent to which its population is growing every day? Have they calculated that the addition to the population made every year requires no less than from 100,000 to 120,000 acres of wheat to be grown every year to meet their wants? If we cannot add this quantity every year must we not look abroad for aid; and do not circumstances loudly call upon us to make provision in time for the wants that are coming upon us? (hear, hear). I ask Hon. Gentlemen will they wait until the time of distress, famine, and mortality arrives before you make a settlement of this question? and will you then be able to settle it satisfactorily to your own minds, or in such a way as to produce a good effect upon the minds of those who require the change, in order to be supplied with food? (hear, hear). I think this is the time at which the Repeal of the Corn Laws ought to be effected and settled; and by doing it now we shall effectually provide for the happiness of the people, and excite a spirit of emulation and enterprise which must result in the general good (hear, hear). It is not necessary for me to go into all the objections of the Hon. Gentlemen who oppose this measure. I am surprised that so many of my Hon. Friends should express themselves in terms of such

strong disapprobation of the conduct of Her Majesty's Government (hear). I regret that some of those for whom I have the greatest respect should have expressed themselves hostile, not merely to the measure, but to the individuals by whom it is propounded (hear, hear). I do not presume or intend to retort upon any Hon. Gentleman the expressions used and applied to us. But my Right Hon. Friend the Member for the University of Dublin, in a speech which he will permit me to state contains far more of eloquent declamation and attack upon my Right Hon. Friend than of argument upon the subject, stated that it was the duty of an independent member of the House to maintain what he believed to be a right opinion, independent of the men by whom any measure might be brought forward (cheers from the Protectionists). I allow, in the fullest terms, the propriety of the Right Hon. Gentleman retaining to himself that right. I only ask him to allow the Ministers of the Crown the same latitude of acting upon the principles they believe to be right, independently of those by whom their measures may be opposed (cheers). I ask him if he himself thinks that he is not liable to censure if, while acting upon principles which he believes to be right, he will at least not allow others to pursue the same course without bestowing upon them those opprobrious epithets he has applied to them? (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Gentleman told us that we were unstable in mind (cheers from the Protectionists). He says that we are infirm of purpose, and calls us political tergiversators (cheers from the same quarter). My Right Hon. Friend told us that we were "Cabinet jugglers," and made use of an observation which was not very kind, courteous, or just; and one which I regret the more, as it affects the character and reputation of my Right Hon. Friends, rather than that it is applicable to any part I have had in the proceedings of the Government. The House has had laid before them distinctly the whole of the transactions of the Government in their resignation of office and their return to it; and I believe, with the exception of my Right Hon. Friend, there is not a man in the House who would believe there was any but the utmost openness and sincerity in those transactions (cries of "oh! oh!" and laughter below the gangway). There was no deception, no political jugglery, which the Right Hon. Gentleman imputes to us, as the facts prove (hear, hear). My only regret is, that the public at large, viewing the opinion of my Right Hon. Friend as that of one who is in the habit of giving judgment upon a careful consideration of evidence, might be misled by his departure from that candour and coolness in forming a conclusion which I believe he is accustomed to display, and which certainly is most becoming in one filling his high judicial office (hear, hear). I may be called a political tergiversator (derisive cheers). But, Sir, I was afraid to maintain party connexions in opposition to the public interest (hear, hear). I was afraid to risk the subsistence of a nation in deference to the opinions of a party (cheers). If that was cowardice, I am guilty of that cowardice, and I am not ashamed to avow it (cheers and counter-cheers). If I am a political tergiversator, it is in this way: I may have turned my back upon my political friends, but it was only to protect them from the consequences of

their want of foresight (cries of "oh, oh!" and renewed laughter below the gangway). Seeing what there was a-head, a famine in Ireland, and fearing the effect of the reaction upon the interests of this country, I was not ashamed to turn a bold front to the threatening dangers, though in doing so I may have turned my back on some of those with whom I was before associated (cheers). I tell my Hon. Friends, that though I painfully feel the loss of their good opinion upon matters connected with politics,—I shall ever remember with satisfaction the period and periods when we were formerly connected; and I trust that when their judgment shall have had time to cool (interruptive laughter and cries of "Oh! oh!")—when they shall see the dangers with which this country is threatened, not merely in prospect, but in real operation,—when they shall be aware of the necessity that existed of making provision for those dangers by the alteration of the laws affecting the supply of food, I know enough of them to believe that, however inconsistent it may appear to them now to change their opinions upon a public measure, there is not one of them who will not then admit that he was wrong in condemning this measure, which has been proposed by her Majesty's Government with the full belief that it is calculated to promote the best interests of the country (cheers).

MR. FERRAND, who was met with cries of "hear, hear," from the Protection benches, said, I believe, Sir, I am now perfectly in order in alluding to those petitions which were presented a few nights ago by the Noble Lord the Member for the West Riding of Yorkshire (Lord Morpeth). Hon. Gentlemen will remember that, in the year 1843, I produced evidence before this House that the Anti-Corn Law League had purchased signatures in the West Riding of Yorkshire at 1s. a hundred (laughter, and cries of "hear, hear"). I was well aware when the Noble Lord presented those petitions, that though he might believe that the signatures to them were genuine, and the unbiassed acts of the parties who had attached their names, such was not the fact; and I am here prepared to prove before a committee of this House, if my statement is denied, that the working people are compelled by the master manufacturers, who support the Anti-Corn Law League, to attach their signatures to these petitions, however strongly they may be opposed to them in principle ("hear, hear," from the Protection benches). If those men dare refuse to attach their signatures to such petitions, they know perfectly well that they sacrifice their daily bread (hear, hear). I am indebted to the Hon. Member for Montrose (Mr. Hume) for having, several years ago, exposed in this House the odious intimidation and oppression which was practised upon the working men in the manufacturing districts, if they dared to disobey their masters. He said in this House, that "it was a regulation entered into by the masters of Scotland that no person who quitted one factory should be employed in another; and that object was effected by the masters sending round to each other lists of the men who from any cause whatever had quitted their employment, so that no man who happened to differ with his master could succeed in obtaining employment elsewhere. "Was not this," said the Hon. Gentleman, "an odious combination?" (hear.) That combination has been introduced into the manufacturing districts of

Yorkshire and Lancashire ; and I again repeat that no working man who is employed by an Anti-Corn Law League manufacturer dare refuse to attach his signature to any petition that may be presented to him. But I have seen several petitions for the Repeal of the Corn Laws presented to this House by Hon. Gentlemen opposite, and among others, one by the Noble Lord the Member for the city of London. I will ask those Hon. Gentlemen, as well as the Noble Lord, whether they conscientiously believe that the signatures to those petitions are genuine? I have never heard those petitions alluded to during this debate. If the Hon. Gentleman who presented them had believed the signatures to them were genuine, they would surely have pointed to them as an evidence of public opinion upon this question. I remember the Noble Lord the Member for the city of London rising in his place, and asking the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel), after he had been placed in power backed by a majority of 91 in this House, how he intended to conduct the affairs of this great country. The Right Hon Baronet replied, "I am asked by the Noble Lord how I intend to conduct the affairs of this nation." Then turning round to the men who had placed him in power, the Right Honourable Baronet said, "I will walk in the direct path, and in the light of the British Constitution" (cheers from the Protectionists). I believe it is in unison with the spirit of the British Constitution that when a dissolution of Parliament occurs, and a general election takes place, the candidates for the suffrages of the electors should appear before them, and honestly and openly explain, without reserve, their political principles (hear, hear). Not only are they compelled to do this, but they have to undergo a most searching examination; and the electors do not decide for whom they will vote or in whom they will place confidence till they have duly weighed the political principles of the candidates who may appear before them. When the last Parliament was dissolved, I believe Her Most Gracious Majesty declared in her speech that she was anxious to take the sense of the nation upon those great questions which then agitated the public mind (hear, hear). When I stood upon the hustings at Leeds by the side of the Noble Lord the Member for the West Riding (Lord Morpeth), by the side of my Hon. Friend also Member for the West Riding (Mr. E. Denison), and by the side of the Hon. Member for the borough of Leeds (Mr. W. Beckett), I heard this language uttered by the Noble Lord. On the 25th of June, 1841, the Noble Lord (Lord Morpeth) said—"The cause which I conceive is at the bottom of the great struggle which I am about to commence is a war against monopolists, and it is not before such an assembly as this, or in the Cloth Hall, at Leeds, that I can despair of triumph." Now, that I call a fair and manly way of laying down the principles of Free Trade. Mr. S. Wortley (the present Lord Wharnccliffe), to show his purpose of standing by the Corn Laws, quoted the remark of Lord Melbourne in the House of Lords—"When I hear my Noble Friend (Earl Fitzwilliam) speak of leaving the agriculture of this country wholly without Protection, I declare before God I think it the wildest and maddest scheme that ever entered into the mind of man!" I am glad to see the Right Hon. Baronet, the Secretary of State for

the Home Department, in his place. He went before his constituents when he accepted office, and how stands he pledged to the electors of Dorchester? I have read the speech which the Right Hon. Baronet delivered to his constituents on that occasion, and was delighted with its talent and ability; and I think the best thing the Protectionists could do would be to print it in a cheap form and circulate it through the country, as the First Lord of the Treasury used to do with his speeches when in opposition to the Whigs (laughter). I was then one of the rank and file of the Conservative party, and I used to receive large packages of Sir R. Peel's speeches on the Corn Laws, which were sold at one penny each (laughter). Who sent them to me I never found out, but I suspect that the Right Hon. Baronet had heard that I was a warm and earnest supporter of his principles, and therefore favoured me with packages of his speeches, carriage paid, which I circulated among the people in my neighbourhood, and I rejoice to say they made many proselytes and were the chief cause of the return of Mr. Stuart Wortley as a Protectionist (hear, hear). But to return to the Right Hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department; he said—"A friend of mine said, And what about the Corn Laws?" I said—"I would not avoid that subject; nor will I. I conceive the true principle to be, that a protective duty should be substituted for absolute prohibition; and I think that, as a general rule, it should be the smallest amount which, on a careful revision, would give to native industry fair play in its competition with foreign countries, the circumstances attending our relation to those countries being duly considered." Then he went on to quote what poor Lord Melbourne said on the Corn Laws. What did Lord Melbourne say in the House of Lords when the proposal to alter the Corn Laws was mooted in that House? He declared—"That it would be absolute madness in any one to make such a proposition." The Right Hon. Baronet then proceeded to say—"I never have and never will shrink from public opinion." Then why don't he go down to his constituents? (cheers). I am delighted to see the Noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) in his place. The Right Hon. Baronet thus spoke of the Noble Lord and his party—"The late Government is fallen to rise no more. The question now at issue is this—shall the Conservative or Democratic principle prevail? Shall Messrs. Roebuck, Warburton, O'Connell, and Bowring sway the destinies of this great empire, or shall Sir R. Peel continue Prime Minister?" (laughter). Let me ask the First Lord of the Treasury who have been his supporters of late? (loud cheers). Where has been the "democratic Roebuck?" Where has been the "democratic Warburton?" Where has been the "democratic O'Connell," who was only a short time ago a "convicted conspirator?" (applause). The Right Hon. Baronet continued his address to his constituents as follows:—"My opinion is, that a further prevalence of the democratic principle would prove most destructive to the institutions and great interests of the country. Should that unfortunate day ever dawn upon the political horizon when the principles of democracy will be paramount, degraded indeed will be our fate,—

" 'The day when thou imperial Troy must bend,  
 "And see thy warriors fall, thy glories end.' "

But I will add,—

“ ‘ May I be cold before that dreadful day,  
“ Pressed with a load of monumental clay.’ ”

[The mock-heroic tone in which the Hon. Member read this extract threw the House into convulsions of laughter.] After this poetical fervour, the Right Hon. Baronet concluded his speech thus,—“ It now only remains for you to decide whether I shall return to the House of Commons as your representative. The Right Hon. Baronet then sat down amidst most vehement and long-continued shouts of applause. As no other candidate presented himself, Sir J. Graham was pronounced duly elected, and was afterwards chaired through the town, with the usual honours.” Mr. Ferrand concluded a long and powerful appeal in favour of Protection to native industry.

DR. BOWRING moved the adjournment of the debate to this day (Wednesday).

MR. M. MILES begged upon that to move an amendment, that the debate be adjourned to Thursday evening. He did not think that it would make the slightest eventual difference, and he was of opinion that the business for which, as he understood, Wednesdays had been set apart, should not be interfered with. If his wish had been consulted, a division would long since have been come to; but on a question of such importance, one, as all agitating the country, east, west, north, and south, it would have been impracticable, and, perhaps inadvisable, to close the debate before this week. It had certainly already been sufficiently discussed, as far as that side of the House was concerned; and there would therefore be no objection to an adjournment to Thursday. He sincerely hoped the discussion would not be continued over Friday night (hear). The Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had that day presented a petition from Liverpool, containing a prayer to that effect, from merchants engaged in the American trade, and also representing the great impediments which the delay in a settlement presented to mercantile business (hear, hear). That might be looked upon as the general feeling on the subject; and the sooner a settlement was effected the better for Ireland (hear). If, in reference to that country, the Right Hon. Baronet introduced a short bill, the object of which should be to give an immediate supply of food, his (Mr. Miles') consent should be cheerfully given to its passing (cheers). If famine, while the debate was going on, did come on the Irish people, and if the price of provisions did rise, upon the Right Hon. Bart. would rest all the responsibility (hear).

SIR R. PEEL was understood to assent to the adjournment to Thursday.

The debate was then adjourned to Thursday.

#### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26.

The adjourned debate was resumed by

MR. D. ROSS, who commenced by referring to the speech of the Hon. Member for Knaresborough (Mr. Ferrand). If that Hon. Member had addressed himself to the question, he (Mr. Ross) would have felt it his duty to answer him; but he did not feel himself called on to follow the Hon. Member into the subject of the West

Riding election, nor to defend the manufacturers, nor to prove that the Hon. Member for Stockport had never sold milk to his workmen (hear, hear). The Hon. Member had declared that the labouring classes felt that they would be injured by this measure; but he had failed to prove it. The Hon. Member for Northamptonshire, in his speech,—which, had it been as cogent in reasoning as it undoubtedly was beautiful in diction, would have deserved the cheers it received,—had argued that labour was entitled to legislative protection. Was the Hon. Member prepared to follow his argument to its legitimate conclusion? Was he prepared to make it penal in any one to interfere with the labour of the workman? The whole speech of the Hon. Member appeared to him to be filled with similar fallacies—propositions of which his own understanding must have disapproved. The principles of Free Trade were by no means new to the Legislature. Two hundred years ago they were announced and defended by Pym and by other distinguished Parliamentarians of that day. He denied that the prosperity of the country depended on the preponderance of agriculture. On the contrary, he held that agriculture and manufactures were mutually dependent on each other for their prosperity. In Ireland a regular rise and fall of each, as compared with the other, was observable; and on this fact he confessed were based many of his hopes for the successful working of this measure. In Scotland the same results were to be seen. In Roxburghshire, and also in the Lothians, increased demand had led to a keen competition for land, to the great benefit of the landholder, and he hoped to see the same effect produced on a larger scale by this measure in the competition between the home-grower and the foreigner. A stimulus was necessary to both the quality and the quantity of production. Without some such stimulus the natives of Great Britain would be as inert as South Sea Islanders; and he would take on himself to say that there could have been no good farming in the golden age (a laugh). The advantage of relaxation of duties had already been shown in the case of the flax trade in Ireland, and this he conceived to be a good answer to the alarms of the Right Hon. Recorder. The reduction of duties had not only increased production, but had also increased the price of home-grown flax. £1,800,000 yearly was paid in wages in this branch of manufacture, £5,000,000 of capital was employed, and 500,000 people drew their subsistence from the cultivation of flax. Great advantages would result to Ireland from extending the cultivation of flax. Butter was another article of produce which deserved attention. Every week 6,000 barrels of Dutch butter were brought here; but were Carlow, Tipperary, and Limerick less fertile than Holland? Then much might be done to improve agriculture; from the application of guano, in one instance, he had got 16 tons of potatoes per acre, on which he made upwards of £16. Under the Ministerial measure the farmers would be able to purchase various articles more cheaply, while, with the exception of corn, their produce would sell at a dearer rate.

Mr. B. DENISON said, that when he had the honour of seconding the address, he did expect, from what the Right Hon. Baronet communicated, that measures would be brought forward of the same

character and description with those his Right Hon. Friend had propounded to Parliament in the course of the preceding three or four years, and which he (Mr. Denison considered so successful. He certainly thought a discussion would take place on the subject of the Corn Laws; but he frankly owned that he was not prepared to expect that the Right Hon. Baronet would propose the total abolition of the Corn Laws, even with a sliding scale which was to last for three years, accompanied also with compensatory provisions; and he begged to say that the Right Hon. Baronet in so doing had committed a great mistake, which many people would regret, if the Right Hon. Baronet did not live to regret it himself. Though he (Mr. Denison) would oppose the measure, he wished it might, if carried, be successful in promoting the public advantage in the way which the Right Hon. Baronet anticipated. Unless the Right Hon. Baronet had a strong conviction that the measure was called for, and felt himself compelled by a sense of public duty to propose it under such circumstances, and at such a time, he never would have ventured to do so. It was as much the business of Government and of Parliament as it was of a private individual to exert themselves as far as possible to promote the welfare of those around them, and to furnish them with abundance of food. He had supported the Corn Laws on that principle only. He had never advocated the Corn Laws on the ground that they were for the advantage of the landlords. He had not advocated them solely, though he had partially, for the sake of the tenantry, who were the hard-working men. But he held that great consideration should be given to the state and wants of the working classes; and if Honourable Gentlemen could convince him that the health, comfort, and happiness of the people would be promoted by the removal of Protection, then he should be in favour of the measure. But till he was so convinced, he must remain of his original opinion, that the Corn Laws were for the benefit of the working classes (cheers). What had been the state of matters for the last few years? The price of corn had fallen nearly fifty per cent. At the present time there was not a larger proportion of the population fed by foreign wheat than at the commencement of the session. In regard to pauperism, the money raised to meet it had within the last century gradually decreased. The country was raising less money in 1841 than it raised in 1810 (hear, hear); and, notwithstanding all this, it had been under the operation of those laws. Between 1791 and 1800, the average annual importation of foreign corn was 470,000 quarters; between 1801 and 1810, 555,000 quarters; between 1811 and 1820, 429,000 quarters; between 1821 and 1830, 534,000 quarters; between 1831 and 1840, 980,000 quarters; and for the last five years, from 1841 to 1845, the average annual importation was 1,500,000 quarters each year. But during many of those years to which this statement in decennial periods referred, the harvest at home was so abundant that there was no importation. In the last two years the importation of foreign corn entered for home consumption was comparatively small; in 1845 it amounted to 136,000 quarters. And yet it was said the Corn Laws must be taken off, that the population might

be supplied with food. If ever there was an interest hard driven, hard spurred, it was the agricultural interest. The protective duties had undergone a succession of changes. Yet improvement in agriculture had been going on at the same rate as the population (hear, hear). He understood that cheer, but he had no reason to think that agriculture would not continue to improve; he would give his Honourable Friends on the Treasury bench all the advantage of the admission that the science of agriculture was in its infancy (hear, hear, and cheers). But in the mean time let them behave frankly and fairly with the agricultural interest; they ought to have given them at least some time under the bill of 1842. He could not accept the invitation to vote for the total abolition of the Corn Laws. It was taking them by surprise, and placing some 300 gentlemen who were most anxious to support the Government, in the awkward position of voting against their Leaders, against their consciences, or against their constituents (hear, hear). He must take one course, and he preferred voting against the Government that had brought forward the proposition (hear, hear). In 1841 he was pressed to become a candidate for the West Riding, in order to prevent two of, he might say, the most popular men in the kingdom from being returned—Lord Milton and Lord Morpeth; the electors returned him in the belief that he would maintain the Corn Laws, and he felt as much compelled to keep his word as if it had been his bond; nay, more, for he might break his bond—his word he would not break (cheers). The Hon. Member for Halifax and others had laughed at the idea of two Conservatives being returned for the West Riding at that election; with an appeal of cheap corn, cheap sugar, he asked, what chance had they? (laughter.) However, he (Mr. B. Denison) told the Hon. Gentleman to take care, or they should thrash both the Free Trade candidates; and so it came off (laughter). Then, without a single reason assigned for the sudden change, even by the Right Hon. Baronet himself, how could he justify himself for voting, in 1846, for the total abolition of the Corn Laws? How could he justify himself in doing so, having, on those grounds, opposed the Noble Lord (Morpeth) who was now his Colleague? (hear, hear). If he had changed his mind he should have felt bound in honour to have resigned his seat; he could not content himself with merely saying, “I have changed my mind, and that disposes of all the speeches on the subject” (cheers and laughter). He intended to stand by all the speeches he had ever made, and not having changed his mind he could not vote for this proposition. He regretted his Noble Colleague (Lord Morpeth) was not in his place, as there was another point to which he wished to allude; the Noble Lord seemed to fancy that his not being opposed at the late election was a sign of a great change of feeling in that constituency; let him not deceive himself too much on that point; various circumstances had induced them, he might say, not to offer any opposition; what those circumstances were he need not state; but had it been a general election, with the proposition of the Government made known, the Noble Lord would have had to look very sharp about him indeed; and he could tell him this, that when the subject was discussed, a great number of gentlemen of considerable influence and

property said they had worked night and day in 1841 against Mr. Wortley and himself, but that now he (Mr. B. Denison) was welcome to use their purses and their services (hear). He thought it only fair to the Noble Lord to advertise him of this, that he might not wrap himself up in the idea that supporting the repeal of the Corn Laws would carry him over the course at the next election. He had stated the reasons that led him to oppose the plan of the Government; he had promised to stand by the Corn Laws, he had not changed his mind, and if he had he would have given to the freeholders who elected him the opportunity of saying, they took him on his word of honour, he had changed his opinion, and they were deceived (cheers).

MR. BROTHERTON said, the Hon. Member who had last spoken seemed to think it derogatory in a man to change his mind. Now, he had read in a book remarkable for its wisdom, that "a wise man doubteth oft and changeth oft;" but that a man of a different description "continueth in his perversity" (hear, hear). The Hon. Member said his only motive for supporting the Corn Laws was because he thought them beneficial to the working-classes, and to a certain extent, to the tenant-farmer, not that they were beneficial to the landlord. He had also adduced certain figures to prove that they must be beneficial to the community at large, because fewer persons were now fed on foreign corn than at the time the Corn Laws were enacted. He was at issue with the Hon. Member upon that point. If he examined the returns made to that House, he would find that from 1815 to 1821, 1 in 30 of the population was fed with foreign corn; on the average of the ten years from 1821 to 1831, it was 1 in 22; and in the ten years from 1831 to 1841, 1 in 16½; and if they took the quantity imported for the last eight years, they would find that 1 in 10 of the population was fed with foreign corn. He believed that many did honestly support the Corn Laws, believing they were a benefit to agriculture, that they were not enacted merely to keep up rents, (though Lord Liverpool said they were), but that their object was to encourage agriculture, so that the supply should always be sufficient for the population. Now, the question was, had they answered that object? More people were fed with foreign corn now than when the Corn Laws were enacted, and this fact disposed of that argument. Again—let Hon. Gentlemen consider whether there were not reasons that compelled the Government to change its opinion. There were 4,000,000 of people in Ireland living on potatoes; the Prime Minister had stated his belief that they were on the brink of a famine in that country, and he was surprised that under such circumstances Hon. Gentlemen could resist the propositions of the Government. They had been made familiar recently with the speeches of farmers and the speeches of labourers; and they had now an opportunity of judging of the component parts of the rhetoric of country gentlemen. The effusions of the latter said—"The land is our own, and we have a right to do what we like with our own; we have a territorial constitution—*ergo* we have a right to govern you; we have fed and employed you, they are worse off in Russia and Poland, and so what do you complain of?" In conformity with such political principles had been their

political conduct, and it was evident from he had hitherto given a course unfortunately the object gained, was to —, the expense of incalculable injury to the — and the misfortune to differ. He regretted that an immediate in place of — by the Hon. Member Corn Laws had not been decided upon, but as it was, — a necessary proposition of the Government deserved and demanded the approval of the country. It would be followed, if adopted, by universal benefits universally felt, by increased employment, by diminution in poverty and crime; and, as conducive to the best interests of the nation, he should feel pleasure in voting in its favour (cheers).

MR. R. A. CHRISTOPHER would not take that narrow view of the question which limited it as it was likely to affect the one interest of agriculture; he looked upon it as a whole, taking also into consideration the accompaniment of compensation offered by the Government; and because, as a whole, he believed it was calculated in its operation to injure, if not utterly destroy, every great interest, agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial, in the country, he was prepared, in consistency with all the opinions he had on former occasions professed, to resist its adoption, and to support the amendment of the Hon. Member for the city of Bristol. The Hon. Gentleman who had last spoken had charged the representatives of the agricultural districts with mystification; but that was a charge which, with far more justice, might be retorted upon those who in an utopian and visionary spirit, sought to influence the commercial policy of England towards the bringing about of rules and regulations which in the present state of society were impracticable and impossible (hear). The Noble Lord the Member for South Lancashire (Lord F. Egerton), who while dealing with the dryness of political economy, did not forget to give it the grace of a classic dress, had declared that agriculture and manufactures should be placed on the same footing; that the interests of the two were identical; that they were both manufactures and both machines constructed according to and governed by the same laws. That the latter was a machine, in one sense, would not be denied; but it was a stubborn machine, and one, as some Right Hon. Gentlemen had found to their cost, rather an unmanageable one (laughter). The manufacturer of corn had another difficulty to contend with; he had to carry on an unequal competition with other countries, and could not regulate the supply according to the demand. These were some of the peculiar difficulties which the agriculturist had to contend with. The principle of Protection was still continued, upon the same ground, to our colonists; differential duties were continued, and no attempt had been made in that House to alter any of those differential duties. Colonial sugar was protected; he had seen in France, near Paris, large quantities of beetroot grown for making sugar, and in the county he (Mr. Christopher) represented, soil of the best quality could be employed more profitably than in France in cultivating beetroot for the same purpose. With respect to the compensations offered, he regretted that his Right Hon. Friend should have used that expression, because, if the measure was a right one of itself, it ought to be acceptable to the various interests, and he repudiated at once the principle of compensation (hear, hear). His Right Hon. Friend

£50,000,000 ; that two-fifths of the shipping interest, as some apprehended, would be lost if foreign corn would come from foreign countries, gotten that the same was employed in bringing it, which would benefit the shipping interest. But at the end of his speech, he said that he did not see how the agricultural interest could be injured, for he did not know where all the foreign corn was to come from (hear). Why, if the shipping interest was to be benefited by the large importation of foreign corn, how could he argue that the agricultural interest would not be injured? (hear, hear). With respect to the relative prices of foreign and British corn, he would read a comparison of the average prices of wheat in England and at Dantzic :—

	ENGLAND.		DANTZIC.			ENGLAND.		DANTZIC.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.		s.	d.	s.	d.
1836	48	6	28	7	1840	66	0	52	0
1837	55	10	29	0	1841	61	0	52	0
1838	64	0	49	0	1842	57	0	53	0
1839	70	0	53	0	1843	50	0	39	0

He had no account for 1844 ; but for eleven months of 1845 the average price of wheat in England was 50s. 10d. ; and in 1844, he had the authority of an eminent corn merchant (Mr. Saunders), that he had bought a very large quantity of wheat from the Baltic, and of excellent quality, at 26s. 6d., when the average price in England was 50s. 10d. (hear, hear). The effect of the measure would not be permanently to make bread cheaper ; it might do so at first, but this would not be its ultimate effect, and meanwhile, much land would be thrown out of cultivation. Mr. Deacon Hume thought that arable land might be changed temporarily to pasture land, or to growing culinary vegetables, without injury ; but every tyro in farming, the most miserable occupier of land, knew that, if you broke up land, converting arable into pasture, it took at least 25 or 50 years to restore it to the condition in which it was when broke up. It would, in the first place, affect most grievously the agricultural labourers ; the second class likely to suffer from it would be the small occupiers of land. He opposed the proposition, then, because he could not view otherwise than with deep sympathy the probable sufferings of persons who formed such valuable portions of society, and he opposed it also because he could not bear to look the transition state into which political economists said the country must sooner or later go through. He felt for the small landed proprietors—the men of moderate estates, but of ancient families, whose races had enjoyed their hereditary possessions for centuries, and who desired to transmit unimpaired to their posterity that which they had themselves derived from a long line of ancestors. He addressed the House not on behalf of those who enjoyed all the luxuries and refinements of life, but on behalf of the humbler classes, and he wished on no account to close the observations which he had taken the liberty of addressing to the House without expressing the pain and regret which it occasioned him to differ from the Right Hon. Baronet at

the head of the Government, to whom he had hitherto given a cordial and unqualified support (hear, hear).

MR. CARDWELL said, that although he had the misfortune to differ from the greater part of the speech delivered by the Hon. Member for the West Riding of Yorkshire, yet it was not, therefore, necessary for him to dissent from every one of the positions which that Hon. Gentleman laid down; on the contrary, he should in a few observations which it would be his duty to address to the House, advert to several of those points in which he agreed with gentlemen who opposed the motion, and he should likewise express his assent to some of the doctrines on which they seemed to lay the greatest weight, and even to a portion of the facts which they occasionally employed. Along with the Hon. Member for the West Riding of Yorkshire, he admitted that agriculture had gone on improving with the increase of population in this country, though every one must acknowledge that the tendency of our commercial policy had been to relax the protective system. He knew perfectly well that agriculture went on improving, though prices were now much lower than they were at the commencement of the present century. It had been said, and he fully agreed in the position, that agriculture had improved, and that the general welfare of the people had advanced at the same time. Nor did he deny that the prosperity of the country varied with the state of the harvests; he would not dispute the position that they did so in a direct ratio, neither was he about to dispute that the people were better supported than they had been, but as he never enjoyed an opportunity upon former occasions of addressing the House, on the subject of the Corn Laws, he should now take the liberty of shortly stating the grounds upon which he gave to the proposition for their final adjustment his most cordial support (hear, hear). The friends of the agricultural interest, as they were called, and the gentlemen who stood forward in that House as their advocates, would be uncandid if they did not admit that their great strength lay in showing that the protection for which they so strenuously contended was not a protection for the benefit of any particular interest. Upon that ground, then, he should meet them; and he should be unworthy of addressing them from that place if he did not admit with them that the welfare of the whole community was and ought to be the paramount consideration with Members of that House. It was, of course, full in the recollection of every one who heard him that those who stood forward as the advocates of the agricultural interest did so on the grounds that this country ought to render itself independent of foreign supplies—for the purpose also of promoting the investment of capital in domestic agriculture—of insuring to the farmer remunerating prices, and of creating such a Protection as would render the rate of wages steady and sufficient. In the first place, he would solicit the attention of the House to this supposed independence of foreign supplies, and he should begin by asking what was the signification of that phrase? In what manner was this country to be rendered independent of foreign supplies? He could not suppose that Hon. Members had forgotten such important facts, as that the declared value of the native manufactures which England annually exported amounted to not less than

£50,000,000 ; that two-fifths of our revenue arose from taxes imposed upon foreign imports. Did Hon. Members recollect the history of our manufactures ? They surely could not have forgotten that the strength of our manufacturing system carried us through one of the most deadly wars in which this country had ever been engaged. England had America and France against her. For cotton we were dependent upon America, and for corn upon France. We managed to get both, and to bring that tremendous conflict to a successful issue. In the course of the present discussion the House had been told that in the year 1842 the country experienced much distress. To what was that owing ? Not surely to our intercourse with foreign nations. The distress existed, but it could not have been owing to the want of protection, for in those days the country lived under the operation of the Corn Laws. There had been a falling off in our foreign customers and our labourers were starving, but no one would say that that had been owing to Free Trade. If we depended upon foreign supplies in matters so important as those to which he had already adverted, and in the supply of which the country had not frequently been disappointed, then he desired to know what reason was there for any apprehension with regard to corn ? Why should the country be less secure with regard to corn than with regard to anything else ? Our gross imports of corn averaged 2,000,000 of quarters annually, which was not less than ten per cent. upon the whole consumption of the country. It was, therefore, little better than a play upon words to assert that the existing law rendered us independent of foreign supplies. It might be very well if they could maintain demand while they increased produce ; but if supply increased without the possibility of augmenting demand, the evil would be evident. There would, however, be a twofold benefit in adopting a course which was calculated to maintain demand and increase produce at the same time. It might be said that this was hypothetical, but for the purpose of maintaining it he should call into court a most unexceptionable witness. Let Hon. Members only look at the speech of the Member for Somerset on the present tariff. Upon that subject he went into these copious details, which he was so well qualified to handle, and so competent to explain. He showed that we were not prosperous when we were protected from foreign rivalry to the extent of cent. per cent. He could from the speech of the Hon. Member for Somerset, show that in proportion as we relaxed Protection we diminished the cost of production. It was admitted that the country was more flourishing than it had been, and one of the first symptoms of reviving trade in Manchester was a sudden demand for inferior joints of meat. The Hon. Member for Somerset had told the House that there had been a deficiency of 16,000 sheep in the weekly supply of London, yet the imports of the whole year did not supply one weekly defalcation. Had not the Government measures, he would ask, diminished the cost of production throughout the country ? Another part of the case upon which great stress had been laid was the tendency which protection had to secure a remunerating rate of wages to the agricultural labourer, and in conformity with this principle the utmost wonder was expressed at the recent

alterations in the tariff with regard to the article of silk; and yet of all others there was none to which an expression of surprise was more inappropriate. No doubt there was a wide difference between that which was produced by hand-labour and that which machinery yielded, because indefinite supplies of manufactured goods at low prices created markets which did not previously exist, and the greater the number of peoples that were converted into customers, the more independent did England become of any one or two nations. The market was not merely extended in Germany or in America, but our manufacturing rivals there continued their competition under increasing disadvantages—their production became every day dearer and dearer, ours cheaper and cheaper. To protect agriculture, then, would be the continuance of increasing disadvantages—it would be retrogression, not advancement; while, by pursuing a different course, England would successfully oppose free intercourse to hostile tariffs. At the present period of the debate he should not weary the House by going into statistical details, the papers were before them, and Hon. Members could judge for themselves; but he could not help reminding them how often they had been told that Russia could send into this country 5,000,000 quarters of grain, for which we should be obliged to pay in the precious metals; but Russia herself produced the precious metals, and England did not—they might as well say, that in return for the cotton manufactured goods which we got from the north of England, we sent from London coals to Wigan or Newcastle. One country might certainly force us into a circuitous trade, but that would be as much against their interest as ours; therefore no rational ground of apprehension could be laid upon that foundation. Reciprocity in trade was so manifestly advantageous to both parties that few people would be led to sell in the cheapest and buy in the dearest markets (hear, hear). There was another argument which rested on the peculiar burdens of land. He did not think that he should be justified in entering upon that subject at much length (hear, hear). He did not mean to decline it, on the contrary, he was ready to admit that a claim of that kind ought to be fairly looked into, and that a protected interest possessed a claim to have its proved burdens fully inquired into and considered, and, if possible, relieved. No one wished to dispute that proposition; but what he contended for was, that the landed interests had no right to say, “We are a burdened interest,” which was a very convenient argument for Protection, and then to say also, “In spite of you, we will remain a burdened interest, in order that we may maintain our protection” (hear, hear). Such a conclusion could not be admitted, and he hoped that it would not be attempted to be supported. He had now gone cursorily over the main arguments used by Hon. Gentlemen near him, and, if his memory did not fail him, he had not omitted any one main argument except the colonial argument. He had put the case of our independence of foreign supply, he had put the case of security for an advance of prosperity, he had put the case of securing fair and remunerative prices, he had put the case of giving the labourers an increased rate of wages; and he had endeavoured to show that, by increasing the amount of labour in our great manufactures, they had raised the rate of wages from 8s., 12s.,

or 15s., to something like 30s., or 40s. He had shown that population and wealth had increased by the process he had described, and asked Hon. Members to draw the inference that, with wages of 30s., a man would cause a greater demand for butcher's meat, for bread, and for the produce of agriculture generally, than the man who earned only 8s., or 12s., or 15s.; and he had asked them to believe that when by these increased wages the population was drawn from the agricultural districts the rate of wages would naturally rise in those districts and the condition of those who remained would be materially benefited; and having touched also upon the argument of peculiar burdens, he was not aware that in the course of that long debate any considerable argument had remained unnoticed, except the colonial argument. Now, with respect to this colonial argument, he ventured to say that the position in which he sought to put the colonies had been, as he had always understood from gentlemen interested in the cause of the colonies, that they should be as dear to the British Crown and to the Parliament as Yorkshire or Middlesex; and it appeared to him to have been reserved for that debate to hear it deliberately maintained that the course of policy to be pursued with respect to imperial interests should be made to subserve to colonial interests (hear, hear). If they took a course which was beneficial to imperial interests, it would, except for special and peculiar reasons, be equally beneficial to colonial interests. If this were so, he wished to notice one inconsistent, and, as he thought, most fallacious argument. The colonial argument was maintained by his Gallant Friend the Member for Liverpool (Sir H. Douglas), and by the Hon. Member for Roxburghshire (Mr. Scott); but in the course of that debate a speech had been made which he believed was considered by Hon. Gentlemen as containing the most powerful argument, and which was a speech claiming particular attention (Mr. Disraeli's). In that speech it was contended that the agricultural interest maintained the principle of moderate protection, or, as it was called, of "genuine Free Trade," which descended from Mr. Pitt, to Mr. Huskisson, and from Mr. Huskisson, until that particular juncture, to the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel); but when he looked at the speech to which allusion had been made, and to former speeches of the same Hon. Member, he must remark that there was a distinction to be drawn between the policy of Mr. Pitt in early days, and that adopted in 1787, when he thought he had lost the most important part of the colonies. Up to 1787, Mr. Pitt made an exception in the case of the colonies, but at that time, Mr. Pitt introduced a wider, a sounder, and a more statesman-like view of the case; he adopted the same sentiments with respect to colonial as other interests—he adopted those principles of Free Trade, or moderate protection, which the Hon. Gentleman said descended from him to Mr. Huskisson, and, till lately, to the Right Hon. Baronet; and if Hon. Gentlemen sided with the high authorities of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Huskisson, and the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury, he wanted to know what became of the Gallant Member for Liverpool, and the Hon. Member for Roxburgh, and the great colonial argument? (hear, hear). If the principle were good for the mother country and for the colonies, except under special and peculiar circumstances,

and if the argument were just and logically correct, the colonial must not be regarded as a different argument, but as another mode of stating the same thing (hear). If, then, Hon. Gentlemen's arguments were not so absolutely irresistible, and if their facts were inconclusive, he asked them to consider in what a position they stood before the country. Were there no strong arguments against them? Were they not seeking to levy from the people at large a tax, a very small portion of which went into the coffers of the country (cheers). Were they not setting up an arbitrary barrier to the course of trade? Were they not seeking to deprive the industrious classes of the obvious advantage of disposing of their own produce at their own discretion? (cheers). And could they overcome that, except by arguments most powerful and facts most conclusive? He wanted to show that his own were not any new doctrines, and that he had for them a classical authority, which he was happy to find Hon. Members near him had adopted and had learned to quote. Mr. A. Smith said—"All systems either of preference or of restraint, therefore, being thus completely taken away, the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord. Every man, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice, is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest his own way, and to bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man, or order of men. The Sovereign is completely discharged from a duty, in the attempting to perform which he must always be exposed to innumerable delusions, and for the proper performance of which no human wisdom or knowledge could ever be sufficient—the duty of superintending the industry of private people, and of directing it towards the employments most suitable to the interests of society." An illustration had occurred to his own mind in connexion with a different subject, and which, if he were permitted, he would mention to the House. A very distinguished man who during the late war had taken a conspicuous part in the defence of his country, and the chairman of the commission on our maritime defences, had spoken to him with respect to them, and this gallant admiral had thus expressed himself—"You will be told that you can no longer rely on the ancient securities, that your wooden walls will no longer be able to defend you; but though maritime improvement may deprive you of your ancient securities, do not be afraid of keeping pace with the march of improvement (cheers); for you will be supplied with new and better securities. You will be informed in a few minutes by one modern invention of the point of danger, and in the course of an hour you will be enabled by another modern invention to concentrate upon the point of attack the disposable force of the country, and you will become, not an extended country, but a fortified citadel" (hear, hear). If he believed that this rule did not apply equally to the agricultural and social condition of the country, he would not support the change now proposed. Let him say, "With the march of improvement let us keep pace; don't be afraid; for, if we have removed from us the ancient securities, the independence of foreigners, and the advantages of artificial prices, we shall be given new and better securities in every growing demand, and in a great and increasing population." They would have an increasing trade,

there would be an increasing power of production, and with the reduction of price there would be an increased consumption. We had become an extended country, and we should be, as the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury had eloquently remarked, a country in which the demand for agricultural produce would increase as rapidly as the supply. They would find, therefore, that in this country the interests of agriculture and of commerce, when rightly considered, depended upon the same principles, and would be promoted by the same measures. He would trouble the House with only a very few statistical statements; but could it be proved that an increase of agricultural demand did coexist with an increase of population and an increase of employment in the manufacturing districts? Let him take Mr. Porter's statement of the increase in the valuation for county rates in the manufacturing towns. He was aware that there had been a different mode of making the assessment; but this return did, nevertheless, contain substantial proof of the progress in those districts. He would take the valuation of 1815, and compare it with the valuation of 1841: "Valuation made for county-rate in the townships which now constitute the boroughs of Manchester and Salford:—

		" MANCHESTER.		SALFORD.
" 1815	.....	353,376	.....	918,397
" 1829	.....	495,997	.....	
" 1841	.....	1,022,055	.....	2,703,292
" Increase		189 per cent.		194 per cent."

If that were the increase in the value of property in those towns assessed to the county-rates between 1815 and 1841, let him read an extract from a return made by Mr. Horner, the Inspector of Factories, in the present session of Parliament:—"Since the last return to Parliament in February, 1839, there has been an increase in my district of 529 factories, of 10,041 horses' power, and of 50,522 persons employed." He would ask Hon. Members then to work out with him an arithmetical calculation, and see what increased quantity of butcher's meat and what quantity of wheat these 50,000 persons employed at a high rate of wages would necessarily consume. Could it be doubted that very much of the improvement in the agricultural districts must result from this increased demand? Mr. Horner went on to say,—“This increase has all taken place since November, 1842, when the revival of trade began; and indeed the increase of persons employed since that time must have been considerably greater than the above amount; for between June, 1838, when the collection of particulars for the return of 1839 began, and November, 1842, many mills had entirely ceased to work, and others had considerably reduced the number of their hands. The total number of power-looms in my district, ascertained by this inquiry, is 142,949. The only return of power-looms made to Parliament is that of 1835, and I find from it, that in the same parts of England which now constitute my district, viz. Lancashire, part of the West Riding, and the whole of the North Riding of the county of York, and the four northern counties of England, there were then only 63,861; showing an increase of 79,088 in the ten years; and there are now 26,237 more power-looms at work in my district alone than

there were in the whole united kingdom ten years ago." He did appeal to the House, therefore, whether a statement of such facts was not a more pressing argument than any other facts or arguments? In all these cases the rate of wages was generally high, but what was the experience of Mr. Horner with respect to the silk trade, and how were the workmen practically affected in the settlement of these questions? "Throughout the entire district a general scarcity of hands is noticed, and a consequent rise of wages. In the silk districts particularly, hands are very scarce." Let them observe how the sound interests of trade subserved to the interests of humanity better than any mistaken legislation (hear, hear):—"And I have been informed that instances are not wanting where children working half time have got as much wages, and in some cases it is said that they got more, than they did when they worked ten hours; but I am told that a rise also has taken place in the wages of those who now work ten and twelve hours respectively. This was not confined to Manchester or to Salford, but if they went to Preston or to any other district, they would see that the course which had been pursued had been everywhere attended with the same results. He must here refer to a remarkable speech lately made at a meeting of the Dock Commissioners of Liverpool by the chairman, and he hoped the Honourable Member for Durham (Mr. Liddell), who had made a complaint of the injury likely to be done to the shipping interest, was in the House, that he might have the benefit of this statement (hear). The chairman stated—"Surprise has been expressed in the council when an increase of 100,000 tons was talked of some time since; but I have not now to deal with an increase of 100,000 tons, but with an increase of hundreds of thousands. In the dock financial statement of the 24th June, 1845, which was the end of the financial year, the increase was 383,819 tons over the preceding year. The increase in six months from June, to the 31st December last, exceeded that of any previous period, inasmuch as it showed an increase of 600 vessels and 209,409 tons over the corresponding six months of the previous year. . . . The increase in the East Indian trade has been about 20 per cent., and the increase in the United States and western trade has been about 30 per cent." That was where there had been hostile tariffs. The chairman went on to say—"I may also state, that in proportion as we afford increased dock accommodation, in the same proportion shall we draw trade to the port. • Suppose that at no distant period, which I dare say will be the case, we were to have modified rates of duties on various other foreign productions (which he specified), which are at present virtually excluded by a high and impolitic tariff; when the duties are so reduced, it is not in the power of man to divine what accommodation will be required in a port like Liverpool (cheers). Liverpool will stand in the pre-eminent position of possessing 203 acres of docks and basins, with about 15 miles of quay space." It would be presumptuous in him to express in the House of Commons his sanguine anticipations of the great and growing increase in the commercial and manufacturing districts with which he had the honour to be connected, but he might cite this business speech made to business men, and to declare with this speaker the

truth that "It is not in the power of man to divine the increase of accommodation which will be required."

MR. LIDDELL—The timber trade.

MR. CARDWELL would come to that trade. Mr. B. Moore said :—"One fact connected with the timber trade will show its importance to the country, and that is, that there are more artificers above 18 years of age employed in the different ramifications of the timber trade than in any other single trade that can be mentioned." He would first give the results of the recent changes as they affected the North American trade.

MR. LIDDELL—The Baltic trade, not the Canada.

MR. CARDWELL would give the Baltic trade also. The argument the other evening was, that all the increase of trade had gone to the Baltic, and that there was no increase in the Canada trade. Now, Hon. Members should have the facts which ever way they liked (cheers). He would show a concurrent increase in both trades, and he really did not know in which there had been the most satisfactory progress (hear, hear). First, however, let him refer to the increase in British America :—

	VESSELS.	TONNAGE.		VESSELS.	TONNAGE.
1838	305	160,415	1842	165	91,179
1839	339	170,591	1843	311	154,518
1840	230	133,400	1844	369	189,414
1841	318	174,948	1845	453	239,854

(cheers). And next let him take the same years with respect to the trade with the Baltic :—

	VESSELS.	TONNAGE.		VESSELS.	TONNAGE.
1838	72	22,788	1842	33	11,239
1839	58	17,415	1843	61	17,253
1840	48	14,000	1844	51	14,144
1841	40	11,923	1845	113	33,752

(cheers). He was very much obliged to his Hon. Friend and for the interruption, and to the House for the kindness with which it had listened to these statistics. He saw an Hon. Friend of his, the Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson), had just entered the House, and he wished to disabuse his mind of a fallacy which appeared to pervade it. He had already alluded, in his absence, to the fallacy of the effect upon imports of corn and of the payment of Russia in gold. His Hon. Friend, who was well versed in the practice of railway making, said that he could make railways enough if we did not send our money abroad for the purpose of buying corn. But, during the period of his Hon. Friend's successful attempts, there had been an average each year of 2,000,000 quarters of corn imported, paid for not in gold sent to Russia, but by the exports of trade; and if

a humble individual like himself might express an opinion to the Hon. Member, it would be that the result of the proceeding was this:—his industrious navigators had derived great benefit from the 2,000,000 quarters of corn, and no doubt the profits made on the exports had been invested in the railway companies, and had done a great deal towards those most useful enterprises (cheers). Another experiment showing what the effect of an increase of food would have on the poor. He might be permitted then to say that such conclusions were, he believed, based on reasoning which was almost mathematical, and were surrounded with strong buttresses of facts. These opinions he had always entertained; he had not attempted to disguise them, but he did not think that those who in former years had voted against the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers) ought to shelter themselves, under the plea that they had taken no part in the debate, from their equitable share of responsibility. He did not hesitate to say that he had voted in former years against the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton, and he had always thought that these great changes should be regarded as a question of time. The Hon. Member for Northamptonshire regarded this as a question of time, and why should not he be allowed so to regard it also? Could it be denied, then, that at the present time it was necessary to look out for a supply of food? (hear). There never was a time when the change could be made and a slighter dislocation of existing interests take place. And though the word “compensation” had been invidiously imported into this debate, he appealed to the House whether that word had been employed by his Right Hon. Friend. But they would not deny that the measure was accompanied by important ones of another kind, conducive to good government, and which, as the opponents of this measure admitted, would confer great advantage on the country. Holding, as he always had, those abstract opinions, he was at perfect liberty to say that this was a proper occasion for the adjustment of this question, and he did not admit that this Parliament was returned as a Protective Parliament and had no right to do it (hear, hear). There were Hon. Members in that House who never disguised opinions like those which he had endeavoured to express, and he ventured to say that a large portion of that great commercial interest in this country who had supported the Conservative party did not think that this Parliament was bound to maintain Protection (hear, hear). The people of England were slow to learn from abstract reasoning, but were very quick to learn from practical experience, and without saying that this question turned on the experience of three years, he did say that the experience of the last three years, and the consequences of commercial relaxation, had not been lost upon that great and reflecting people whom they represented. He said that there was a large and important interest, whose support was essential to the Conservative party, and without the slightest disrespect to the agricultural interest, of whom he should speak most unfairly if he spoke otherwise than with the utmost respect, that interest did expect a reasonable and constantly vigilant, and not unyielding, disposition to watch the ever-varying circumstances of this country in Parliament (hear, hear). He was persuaded that he was borne out by facts,—and he

did with perfect cheerfulness give his cordial support to this measure for the final adjustment of a great and complicated question, believing that in a due, generous, wide, and discriminating regard to all the complex interests of this country they were a Parliament competent to decide upon this great question, and if they decided it in the affirmative they would confer upon the country most important benefits (cheers).

MR. FINCH said the speech of the Hon. Gentleman who had just spoken did great credit to his good taste, temper, and judgment (hear, hear); but he (Mr. Finch) did not think it was calculated to carry great weight with it. As to all the details of manufacturing prosperity, they seemed to tell on his side of the question (hear), for if manufactures and trade were so flourishing under a Protective system, why change that system? But, then, that prosperity was attributed to the change in the tariff. Now, all knew that the great cause of it was not the new tariff, but the settlement of affairs in America, and the stimulus given to trade by railway speculations. It appeared to him as if a moral murrain had broken out among the leading statesmen on both sides (a laugh). The conversions of the Right Hon. Baronet and of the Noble Lord opposite bordered not only on the miraculous, but the ludicrous; and the only distinction between them was, that that of the Right Hon. Baronet was arrived at with railway speed, whilst that of the Noble Lord came with the velocity of the electric telegraph (a laugh). But such conversions carried no weight with them. The conversion of the Right Hon. Baronet was the offspring of events, and not of calm conviction, and therefore this question remained an open one. Now, the Noble Lord the Member for Yorkshire had referred to America, but he said nothing of the American Corn Laws, and he was wise; for if he had subjoined that to his lecture to the English aristocracy, the whole would have been so charged with ridicule that the Noble Lord himself must have laughed at it; but he (Mr. Finch) found from the correspondent of the *Morning Chronicle* that the democrats of Pennsylvania were opposed to Free Trade and to the tariff of 1842 (hear, hear). Of course, he could not but admire the speech of the Right Hon. Baronet. It was distinguished by the tact, talent, and eloquence with which his speeches were usually characterized; perhaps there was no other Hon. Gentleman within those walls who could have made such a speech (hear, hear), and he was glad to see that during the eight years he (Mr. Finch) had not had a seat in that House the mental powers of the Right Hon. Baronet were not diminished (cheers); but the Right Hon. Baronet was rather slow in getting on the wing. That, however, only displayed his dexterity; he knew his weak points, and he therefore brought forward first the details of the potato crop failure to cover them, and, after going over some other points, terminated with a most splendid peroration that in a Prime Minister was really terrific (a laugh). It was a most dangerous speech at the present time from one in his exalted position,—so little in it of calm deliberation,—so much of wild enthusiasm (hear). But it was a very fine speech, and it ought to be answered (hear, hear), and it must be (a laugh); but where were they to find a person of equal talent, eloquence, and weight? Still

it must be answered, and he proposed before he sat down to provide the House with an answer to it (a laugh); but not from himself (laughter). Now, the Right Hon. Baronet's first position was the failure of the potato crop in Ireland; that he (Mr. Finch) conceded. The next was, that it was necessary to open the ports; that he positively denied ("oh, oh!"). Then, the ports being open, they could not possibly sustain the Corn Laws. That was a complete *non sequitur* (hear, hear), and therefore this measure was the worst that could be possibly conceived. Of what advantage could it be to the Irish peasant to open the ports? (hear, hear). The price of wheat in the continental markets was 48s. or 50s., and upon the mention of opening the ports the price would rise some 5s. or 6s. a quarter. How, then, would the Irish peasant, who could not give 15s. for oats at his own door, give from 50s. to 60s. for wheat from the continent? (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet said, if the ports were opened, the Corn Laws could not survive; but he nevertheless referred to six instances in which the ports had been opened, and in every one the Corn Laws had continued. He also referred to Belgium and Holland, where the ports were opened; but yet there was not the least occasion to do away with the Corn Laws. Therefore, every instance he adduced told against himself. But then, he said, that they would have had a tenfold agitation. And what, if they had a twentyfold agitation? And that would be the result now; for they would have the tenfold agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League and the tenfold agitation of the agriculturists. But, at the present day, a statesman must not care for a little agitation (hear, hear). He was not fit to be a British statesman who was not clamour proof (a laugh). If they were to yield to tenfold agitation they might at once repeal the union with Ireland (cheers). If the Right Hon. Baronet had been disposed to stand to his guns, and to maintain his position, he would have been supported by a majority of that House and by a majority of the population of this country (cheers, and cries of "oh, oh!"). He believed that if the question of Free Trade was decided by universal suffrage, the proposal would at once be negatived, and would be thrown into the British Channel (laughter and cheers). He was glad that such an individual as the Right Hon. Baronet had given utterance to the assertion, that the prosperity of agriculture did not depend upon the price of wheat; for if a man of moderate abilities like himself (Mr. Finch) had broached such an opinion, the farmers might have been disposed to place him in a cage, and carry him about the country for show (a laugh). He considered that the statements adduced by the Right Hon. Baronet with reference to the flax manufacture might be used quite as strongly against his position as in its favour; for the Irish flax trade was in a flourishing state on account of the protection given to Irish linens. He (Mr. Finch) believed, however, that the measures now proposed by Her Majesty's Government would inflict serious injury upon the linen trade of Ireland. The Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had made a somewhat unfortunate allusion to Anacharsis Klotz; for, if any one in the world resembled that individual, it was the Right Hon. Baronet (a laugh). He (Sir R. Peel) soared high on the wings of universal philanthropy; he had robbed the Government of its

sovereign character, and he called upon them all to act as citizens of the world. The Right Hon. Gentleman consistently gathered round him the Poles, the Russians, the Swedes, the Danes, the Belgians, the Irish, and the Scotch, and said he would be guilty of no undue partiality, for that whoever produced an article at the cheapest rate should have his custom. He (Mr. Finch) hoped the Right Hon. Baronet would induce all the nations of the earth to meet in some common centre, to swear eternal amity; and that he would, for a season at least, restore the golden age (a laugh). He (Mr. Finch) thought the Right Hon. Baronet had reckoned without his host, for there could be no satisfactory settlement of the question without an appeal were made to the country (cheers from the Protectionists). If the proposal of her Majesty's Government should be adopted, he believed its effect would be so injurious to the fundholders, and to all employed in agriculture, that he would not be surprised if before long the Free Traders were burnt in effigy, and if the question was ultimately settled by a return to old British principles ("hear, hear," and a laugh). They must consider that war might arise, which would interfere materially with the course of Free Trade, and render it necessary for them to adopt a considerable modification in the proposed system. He was of opinion that some privileges ought to be given to our colonies, because, in the event of the parent state going to war, they might be exposed to great inconvenience and losses. He thought, however, that we ought to be cautious in rendering ourselves dependent upon nations with which we might possibly be engaged in war—and especially upon Russia, France, and America. True policy would instruct us to be independent of those countries (hear, hear). He maintained that the system which was proposed to be pursued towards agriculture was essentially unjust. It was exceedingly unjust at once to sweep away Protection. He was aware that the basis on which this question was represented to rest was the general public good; but let it be recollected that for nearly fifty years persons had been induced to invest money in the purchase and cultivation of land, and perhaps not less than £400,000,000 or £500,000,000 had been thus expended; and it was essentially unjust to withdraw from the parties who had laid out their money in agriculture, that protective system under which they had been so encouraged to invest it (hear, hear). The result of the division on this question was well known; Ministers would have a nominal majority and a *bonâ fide* minority (hear, hear), because those who misrepresented the judgment of their constituencies would by the country be deducted from the one side and added to the other (cheers from the Protection benches). They (the Protectionists) would retire from the division with unbroken ranks and undaunted hearts, and prepared to renew the battle on the first opportunity (hear, hear). They would appeal, not only to their constituents, but to the country. They knew the majority of the population were with them (cheers and counter cheers); they believed the majority of those constituents were with them; they trusted soon to have the nation with them (cheers). In the next Parliament there would be three hundred good Protectionists. The cause of Protection was not lost. It was a cause still dear to the

British nation, because it was in unison with British habits, and consonant to British interests. They (the Protectionists) were strong in principle, strong in consistency (renewed cheers); and they would support that cause, and defend it, so long as they had a voice to utter, an arm to raise, or a shot to discharge (loud cheers from the Protection benches).

MR. SEYMER would not have risen but for some allusions made to the opinions of the tenant-farmers; and some Hon. Gentlemen, who had been elected five or six years ago, appeared to have forgotten the sentiments of their constituents (hear, hear). The Hon. Member for Finsbury had been pleased to say, in the course of the debate, that the farmers required, not protection for agriculture, but the protection of the ballot, in order that they might vote according to their consciences, in favour of Free Trade; but there could not be a greater mistake than to suppose that the genuine feelings of the farmers were not in favour of protection. In fact that was a Radical shot fired at random by the Hon. Gentleman, who might represent very well the feelings of a metropolitan constituency, but evidently knew nothing about the opinions of the farmers (hear, hear). He (Mr. Seymour), with his Hon. Colleague, came forward at the recent election for Dorset, in consequence of a requisition signed by the great body of the tenant-farmers. Three or four of the largest properties in the county were in the hands of Free Traders, and naturally the tenants on those estates held back and refused to sign the requisition till they knew what were the wishes of their landlords (ironical cheers); for it was notorious that English tenants generally wished to consult the feelings of their landlords (cheers and counter cheers). He (Mr. Seymour) did not think tenants to blame for that (renewed cheers). Knowing that their landlords were Free Traders, the tenantries in question made inquiry, previous to signing, whether those landlords would object to their taking the course their consciences dictated; the landowners, very much to their credit, said, that this being a farmer's question, they would not interfere, and then, almost without exception, the farmers on those properties signed the requisition (cheers from the Protection benches). So much for the assertion that the genuine feeling of the farmers was not in favour of Protection (hear, hear). He would only add, that should the Gentlemen of the League, or their successors, hereafter attack some of the deeply cherished institutions of the country, and should the Right Hon. Baronet or any other Prime Minister conceive it his duty to give in to that agitation, he would tell them and that Minister too, that they must expect to meet the same opposition from the independent yeomen of England which they had met with on that measure in which the farmers are more personally interested (hear). Having said this of the tenant-farmers of England, as he thought himself, having so lately come from the hustings, entitled to do, he would now resume his seat by thanking the House for the patient attention with which they had listened to his few observations.

MR. VILLIERS—I am glad to see that the accuracy of the gentlemen of the press is so well supported by the Hon. Gentleman. I am happy to hear his confirmation of the report to which I alluded

("no, no"). Why do you say no, when the Hon. Gentleman has just said yes (hear). He has said that if the Corn Laws were to be repealed, it was far better to have them immediately repealed, than postponed for three years (cheers). I claim him therefore as a supporter of the motion which I am to propose (hear, hear), and if the Hon. Gentleman is really representing the sentiments of the farmers, I believe he will vote for that motion (cheers). The Hon. Member has told us that the tenant-farmers are an independent body of men, and the proof he has given is, that many of them go to their landlords to ask how they ought to vote (laughter). He has stated that a great number of persons, whose support he received, held land from landlords of liberal principles, and fortunately for him, they got leave to vote as they liked. But he had given one proof that the farmers were independent. He says they are generally loyal and well affected. This I hold as a satisfactory proof that they are not under the influence of their landlords ("oh!"). I believe it to be the case. I believe they are a very quiet, good sort of people—persons far more estimable than to be led away by the disloyal, disaffected, inflammatory language that from the highest to the lowest of the upper classes is addressed to them ("oh!" and cheers). The complaints of the farmers are not against the State—they do not quarrel with the Government—their grievances are nearer home (hear, hear). Those who know them are aware that they have domestic grievances that are never redressed; but the landlords, instead of remedying these have been going about and telling them that the Government of the country is endeavouring to injure them, and that it is composed of men void of honour and common honesty (hear). The farmers, however, are much too sensible to be led away by all the interested language addressed to them; and so far as I understood the Hon. Gentleman, they are, generally speaking, in favour of immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws—for putting an end to the system at once ("no, no"). I think the great point of the Hon. Gentleman's speech was to show how much under the influence of the landlords farmers were, and how distinct their opinions were from those of the landlords (hear). I do not think I should be doing justice to the principles I have so long advocated in this House, I don't think I should be doing justice to those whom I am representing here, and to those who have co-operated with me throughout the country, if I did not express my joy at the concessions made to wisdom, and truth, and justice, in the propositions and avowals of her Majesty's Ministers (ironical cheers from the Protection benches, followed by applause from the other parts of the House). The subject has been so obtruded upon the attention of this House, that one cannot help forming an opinion on the question as to whether these concessions have been made at any sacrifice of honour on the part of her Majesty's Government; and I declare that it seems to me that the concessions have been made from a lively sense of their responsibility as Ministers and Statesmen, and of the danger to the country of continuing that system (cheers). To those who depended upon facts and arguments to persuade those opposed to them of the impolicy of these laws, it must be gratifying to observe that their abandonment has been conceded by the leaders on both sides, under circumstances which place them entirely above

the suspicion of interested objects (loud cheering). I believe the Noble Lord the Member for London declared to this House in the beginning of last session that he considered "Protection to be the bane of agriculture,"—that when in the course of the summer he asked the House to resolve that "the present Corn Law holds out to the owners and occupiers of land prospects of special advantage which it fails to secure," and when in December last he addressed a letter to his constituents stating that he was ready upon these convictions for the Repeal of the Corn Laws, I believe he did so simply from an honest sense of what was due to the community, and I doubt extremely if he consulted what was deemed the interests of his party in so doing (hear, hear); and with regard to the Right Hon. Gentleman (Sir R. Peel), there has been so much discussion on the subject that it is impossible not to form an opinion of his position in this matter, and I declare that I cannot see in what respect he has deserved the reproaches which he has received from his party (cries of "oh, oh!" and "hear, hear"). So far as I can collect from what the Right Hon. Gentleman has stated to the House, he does not propose this measure willingly; it is from no fault of his own that he is in a position to propose it (hear, hear). He submitted to others the task of proposing it, and it is from no fault of his that he is Minister at this moment to propose the question (hear, hear). I think the public have no reason to be dissatisfied with the present Government for having made the proposal under the circumstances they have done; and if I have been able to collect the opinion of the public on the subject, I should say that they are rather pleased than otherwise that the Right Hon. Gentleman has thrown off these trammels by which Ministers were surrounded on this question—that he has thrown off the trammels of insolent domination—[The conclusion of the sentence was lost in cheers.] The Ministry were told that if they ventured to touch this subject—that if they should attempt to deal with the principles of that body or class, they should no longer continue in the service of the state. The Right Hon. Gentleman, under a sense of his duty to the country, seems to me to have disregarded that dictation, to have proposed this measure for the interests of the community, and to have thrown himself upon the community for support (hear, hear). I believe that the community, that the public in general, are delighted to see at last a Minister relieved from the trammels of a class (cheers); and I further believe that they will carry not only this measure, but every other measure upon which they will only consult the public interest, and have the boldness and courage to propose it (hear). I know that this measure is not complete—I know that it has many deficiencies—and I have been asked by the Hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Line whether I will venture to go before my constituents and recommend the adoption of this measure. I say that I did put upon record within a few hours after the measure was proposed my congratulations to my constituents upon the prospect of receiving so large an instalment of the rights which they had been so long deprived of (hear, hear). And, if I had not done so then, I should certainly have done so after hearing the opening speech of the proposer of the amendment, who stated that if this measure passed, the system of

Protection was abolished for ever; and if I had not done so then, I should have done so after I saw the opposition which the Right Hon. Gentleman received from the other side of the House. I say that that will be accepted as an apology by the country for many deficiencies and for much of the incompleteness of the measure (cheers.) All that abuse will only tend to raise the Right Hon. Gentleman in the estimation of the country; and all the passion and all the violence which have been exhibited on the other side of the House with respect to this measure will only serve to endear it to the public (cheers). Every Member who has deserted the Government, every Member who has risen to declare that he will not support a measure of so great advantage to the public, will only help to raise the Right Honourable Gentleman to a pinnacle of honour which he could not otherwise expect to attain. Sir, I have heard it stated, in the course of this debate, that the Corn Law is useful for the purpose of disseminating a great idea, that of a great principle, a great system of polity, a great system of Protection, of polity that has long prevailed in this country. It is attacked at present, and about to be abolished, but its friends are determined to resist that attack to the last, and to show on what grounds this polity rests. Now, Sir, this is the eleventh day that this system of Protection has been discussed in this House, and I want to know if any one man has got an idea of what this system of Protection is? (hear, and laughter). Has any body any idea, from what has fallen from that side of the House, what is the principle of this system—whether it has any rule in it—whether it has any marks of a general polity? Sir, it is quite clear that the House has not a single idea on the subject (laughter). We ask whether this system can be univiversal? The answer must surely be, No; for it cannot regulate the wages of labour; it cannot regulate the price of food; it cannot raise the price of the wages of labour. We want to know what the effect of that system is; because we come here to legislate for the country at large. The Right Hon. Baronet, the Home Secretary, told us last year, and he repeats it again this year, that the effect of your system was artificially to raise the price of food, while you do not raise the wages of labour; and by force of the information which he received in his high station, he could only come to one conclusion as to the effect of this system. Yet you have all avoided meeting her Majesty's Ministers on this point. You have railed at them for treachery—for having let the cat out of the bag; but you do not answer the Right Hon. Baronet, and you have therefore left yourselves up to this moment open to the charge of supporting a system such as it is described by the Right Hon. Baronet (cheers). The Right Hon. Gentleman has told us that he has been in office during the operation of your laws, when bread has been dear, and under their operation, and when it has been cheap, under the blessing of Providence; and that during the one period all the misfortunes that can befall the poor man have befallen him—disease, crime, increased mortality; but that in the latter period, the cry of the poor has been less heard; there has been less mortality, less disease, less misery—less, in short, of all the suffering which the poor man endured under other circumstances, and, he says, that seeing all these things, he can no longer continue

to support a system, the success of which is calculated to promote the misery of the poor, while its failure, when it has been counter-acted by abundance springing from the bounty of Providence, has contributed to their happiness (cheers). And at this moment there is not one in that corner (pointing to the Protection benches) who can answer me. You did not answer the Right Hon. Baronet last year, when he made his statements. You ought then to have got up and said, that a low price of provisions does not improve the condition of the poor; and that high prices give higher wages (hear). But you did not answer him. You submitted to what he said, and who could suppose that the very men who then remained silent, would the very next year come down and support, as they have done, this law in spite of all the calamities which he then predicted (hear, hear). When the Right Hon. Baronet made that speech last May, it was announced to you that the Corn Laws were doomed. Last May it was made by the Right Hon. Baronet, and it was repeated by the Noble Lord (Lord John Russell), in his letter to the electors of London. You cannot get out of it. That is the purpose of the law, or else it has no meaning whatever (loud cheers). The Hon. Member for Bristol said that manufactures had been carried too far; and that they ought rather to consider what would restrict, than what would increase them. The Hon. Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. S. O'Brien), the leader of that party, who takes on himself to announce the opinions of the Protection party, and tells us what are the views of those opposed to those stated on this side of the House, and by the Government, says we may talk of the increase of a population, and the necessity of more food, but we must not import more food from abroad; and that we ought to confine ourselves to a system which produces three quarters instead of five (hear, hear). Let the country distinctly understand what these gentlemen say. They say, the manufacturing districts have increased too much, and that we ought to confine ourselves to a system which produces less food instead of more (hear, hear). We are not to import food from abroad; we are not to produce as much food as we might do at home, and we ought not to increase the manufacturing system (hear). This is what is stated by your organs, your *Quarterlies*, your *Standards*, and your *Heralds*; they say—"If your manufacturing towns were razed to the ground, if half this metropolis were levelled to the earth, the country would be greater, more happy, and more prosperous;" and you come forward in strict consistency with these views, and say—"We don't want more manufacturing towns; we want fewer and less food." That is your economical theory. What have you said to those who want to find a mode of feeding that increased population? By the last census it appears that you give actually less employment to the people than you did in 1831 (hear, hear), and there is no vent for them but the manufacturing districts. Now, I ask if any sane man, if any fit to be at large, holding such views, ought to legislate for this country? And these are the men who propose to form a Government ("hear, hear," and laughter). These are the men who say—"Only throw out this measure and we will form a Government, we will provide for the people, and we will do it by

diminishing manufactures and furnishing less food !” That is their theory ; how do they propose to effect it ? They say—“ We depend on our territorial influence, on our power over the smaller constituencies, and upon the House of Lords.” They think that by the county representation, the influence they exercise over the smaller boroughs and the House of Lords, they can throw out this measure, and prevent the progress of Free Trade. That is the position of the question at the present moment ; that is what they hope to do by the division of to-morrow ; that is the intrigue that is going on upon this subject. They hope to throw out this measure, to form a Government, and depending on the exercise of their influence, they hope for future majorities, which will enable them to maintain this system. But have you ever considered the position of this question ? (hear, hear). The system is one that must be supported, either by force or by opinion (“ oh, oh !” and cheers). There is no other way of supporting it—and you have tried force ! (hear, hear). When the Corn Law was introduced, it was carried by force (“ oh, oh !”); four years after it was carried it was maintained by force ; in 1815, when it was introduced, the people were put down when they resisted it ; in 1819, the people were put down in Manchester when they resisted it (hear, hear), and they were threatened to be put down by force in 1830. You said there was a way of putting down the people if they ventured to express their opinion, but what you were obliged to put down was the rotten boroughs (cheers and laughter). After 1830 you could not support the Corn Law by force, it was attempted, but you could not do it. In 1839 your proceedings gave rise to the Anti-Corn Law League ; your Protection societies did all in their power to deceive the people ; that was what induced the League to exert itself in the extraordinary manner it has done ; it regulated not its own notions, not the opinions you have ascribed to it, but the opinions of the most intelligent men who ever existed or wrote in this country. It has formed the opinion of the country in favour of the emancipation of trade, the removal of restrictions on commerce, and the abolition of your law. You cannot support it now, either by delusion or oppression, and you are quarrelling with a Minister, conscious of the state of the question, because he will not persevere in supporting it. Now, I ask you, whether you have taken any security whatever against another period of scarcity ? If a scarcity occurs again, and the people call for universal suffrage, or rise up in arms against this law, and you have the Government, what position will you be in ? Just imagine the Government we have seen described, with a Noble Duke at its head, and several Hon. Gentlemen opposite its leading Members, the country suffering, from scarcity, a state of tumult throughout the land, and those Hon. Gentlemen responsible for the preservation of peace and order ; only imagine a set of men in such a miserable, I will not say despicable a plight. What would you do ? Just as you did in 1831 ; you would come to the Right Hon. Baronet, and pray him to take the lead, and try and resist those who were claiming more power than you were disposed to give them. The Hon. Member for Rutland quarrels with the Right Hon. Baronet because he don’t “ stand to his guns ;” would you stand to your guns if you had a starving people

staring you in the face? You cannot put down the people by force ; that is your position. Are you not bound, then, is it not reasonable to consider the demand of the people to remove this law? The Right Hon. Gentleman seems really best to consult your own interest ; the real protection you require seems to be protection from yourselves (hear, hear) ; and he tries to provide it. The Hon. Member for Dorsetshire says he is not afraid of agitation, or the effect of high prices, and a starving people, but of such men as Neckar and Turgot becoming Ministers in this country. I don't wonder at this, for there is some analogy between the state of France at that time and this country. Turgot was a sagacious Minister, there never was a man of more enlightened views than the Minister of France in 1775. Turgot then addressed an extraordinary letter to the King, stating that he undertook the government without the least hope of doing any good, because he found an interested party so strongly opposed to him ; he knew he should be calumniated, he knew they would form a confederacy against him, because he would not allow them to live on the wealth and substance of the nation. But, he added, so great was his desire to serve the public, that he wished to die only with the character of having done what was best for the country,—and for that he accepted office. What was the first thing he did? It was to repeal the Corn Laws (hear). That Minister said two things ought to be especially avoided in every community, and that if they were not avoided in France, they would have national bankruptcy and revolution ; and this was 15 years before the revolution occurred ! He said they must above all things maintain their revenue and avoid a scarcity, or bankruptcy and revolution would overtake them, and that under the system then prevailing there was great danger of both. And before all he declared “ You must have Free Trade in Corn.” That he carried into practice. The first act of Turgot's legislation was to make the internal Corn Trade free, and further, he carried the same views into his manner of dealing with the external trade. But what were his reasons? Before Hon. Gentlemen came down to disapprove of these they should inquire. Then there was a regular barrier in every province, a regular interference between one province and another, so that it made every separate province dependent altogether upon the seasons for food, and, as a consequence of that, each and all were exposed to scarcity, and there were barriers to trade between the provinces and Paris. He sought to put the whole system on a new footing, and to leave trade at liberty. But what was the fate of that Minister? I mention it because it may also be the fate of a Minister of the present time. If you look to Condorcet's *Life of Turgot*, you will see that his propositions raised up a combination of all the people who lived by the abuses of the time (hear)—of all those people who derived a revenue without rendering any services—of all the foolish hangers-on of society—the young Nobles who kept mistresses, and lost their money—the farmers of the revenue ;—all having one interest, which was not that of the many, formed an alliance for evil, and Turgot was driven from power (hear, hear) ; and all other Ministers between '75 and '79 were, in the same way, driven from power, for they foresaw what would be the consequence of Turgot's

dismissal. These are the men that the Hon. Member for Dorset is afraid of. In the works he left, he states what was represented to each other, and to the world, by some of the nobility of France in 1787. He says their cry was,—“We can't live alone on the rents of this country; we want something more; we can't parade ourselves at court, we shall be disgraced; we can't maintain our position; we can't support the order, the class to which we belong, and which is also essential to the existence of the state, unless we have some exemption, some privileges.” Well, they wouldn't listen to any Minister. In '88 there was a scarcity, a bad harvest throughout France; and, as a consequence, there was in the following year, in '89, something of that comprehensive scheme of annihilation of which the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli) so poetically spoke—a scheme which struck at the roots of society—which performed a great change—a social and political metamorphosis. But all these things took place in consequence, not because of the particular or peculiar bad character of the nobility, but because there had happened a scarcity—because there was a failure in the revenue (cheers). Will the Hon. Gentleman who is afraid of this cautious, timid Minister, state what all that proved? It was a proof of famine—a proof of no revenue (cheers). Now I ask Hon. Gentlemen opposite to consider whether the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of her Majesty's Government is not the real, is not the true Conservative—whether it is not he who is doing most for and watching most carefully over their interests—whether, instead of injuring, of annihilating, he is not really protecting them? (cheers.) Remember well that you have not, cannot have, at this moment one single security against the occurrence of a period of scarcity. Did not the Right Hon. Baronet tell you what he apprehended from such an event—that he perfectly dreads any remembrance of, to reflect on, what passed at previous similar periods—that he quailed before the discontent, the sufferings, and the excited feelings that then prevailed? Recollecting that at this instant you have no security against the re-enacting of this tragedy; and, mind you, after all this discussion, after all this enlightenment of the people, it will be an impossibility to deceive them again (cheers). Don't forget that, should it happen, they will look to some one to be responsible for all (hear, hear). Mind, that the scheme you maintain, as they now know, is to prevent, does prevent, the growth of food in other countries, to supply you when you are in want; and that, come what will, you are not safe, and you will not be relieved from this awful responsibility for two or three years to come (cheers). And, at this moment, have you not had an intimation of something like famine in other countries—of a famine in Ireland? And are you certain that you will not have a bad harvest this year, and, may be, a worse the year after? (hear, hear, and cheers.) Why, if it be so, do you know what they will say? “You undertook to feed the people,” will be the charge, “and you have not fed them.” They will be distressed, and they will come to you as the responsible persons, as the self-constituted rulers. They will say—“What are you going to do for us? You undertook to feed us—you have not fed us.” How do you propose to answer such a question as this in 1846,

in 1847, or in 1848? Surely there will be some answer; and be sure that in another period of famine it won't alone be the question of the Corn Laws (hear). The people are then in a state of despair from distress, and they will ask for something more (hear, hear). Much has been said of what the aristocracy does in this country—much of how great an interest it is with them that the people should not perish—and of the mode in which they have governed. We have heard that they have rendered immortal services in critical eras of the nation's history. I was delighted to hear it. I will not dispute it, because I am not so well versed in ancient annals as are many Hon. Gentlemen, but I am very sure that in a time of confusion, in a time of the anarchy which distress creates, men will forget their history, and will look to what they have personally experienced, and take their precedents only from the last forty or fifty years (cheers). And I do honestly believe and declare that they could, and that they will, come to no other conclusion than that the aristocracy of England has wielded the powers of the Legislature against the interests and in opposition to the wishes of the people,—that it has fattened on corruption and grasped unhallowed gains by desperate means (cheers). If they would reconcile themselves to those they ruled, they must give a hearty assent to the measure which is now brought forward to abolish *in toto* a law which, so long as a vestige is left, will be evidence to their shame. If they do discard this I venture to predict that in their fate they will follow those who have ever sought, and for awhile succeeded, to trample upon, to triumph or tyrannize over their race and nation—among whom it ought to have been their fortune to be born, and over whom it should have been their pride to rule with justice and moderation (loud cheers).

MR. G. BANKES moved the adjournment of the debate, which was agreed to.

#### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27.

The adjourned debate was then resumed by

MR. G. BANKES, who said, that to consider the present question in its correct light, it should be viewed as one not brought forward for a temporary purpose to remedy temporary evils, but as involving the future welfare of the community. He would first address himself to that portion of the subject which was preliminary to any approbation or disapprobation of the measure itself—the conduct of the Right Hon. Baronet in bringing them into that unexampled and unprecedented position in which, much to their astonishment and regret, they were then placed. That conduct he (Mr. Bankes) would not define as unconstitutional, but he would say that it was conduct which no one could desire to remain, or to be accepted as a Ministerial precedent (hear, hear). They found first that the Right Hon. Gentleman had, on a recent occasion, exercised the powers and privileges vested in him as Prime Minister—powers and privileges unknown to the constitution, which did not recognize such a Prime Minister—in the first place, influencing the Cabinet of which he was a Member, so as to control the majority—a large majority which before had decided against him—and, in the second place, after his resignation of his office consequent upon that division, and after he

had ceased to be Minister of the Crown, and had become merely a private individual, they found him making a communication to the Sovereign, the undoubted tendency of which was to affect the decision of that Sovereign (hear, hear). For a private and irresponsible individual to take such a course was unprecedented; and, being unprecedented, was, it was almost just to say, unconstitutional (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet, in the first speech of explanation which he made to the House, neglected to explain that principal transaction, and the House would have been altogether ignorant of the matter if its history had not been laid before them by the Noble Lord the Member for London. The Noble Lord had told them, that when in obedience to a summons, he waited upon her Majesty, he declared, in conformity with a resolution previously advisedly adopted, that he found it necessary to decline forming a Government, but when upon this her Majesty placed in his hands the letter alluded to, the whole affair assumed a different complexion, and the Noble Lord then felt himself justified in accepting that which a moment before he had rejected. The Right Hon. Baronet was unaware, he declared, of the individual who was to be his successor. That might be perfectly true; but the Right Hon. Baronet must, at the same time, have known that, after having addressed such a communication to such a quarter, only one person would have been bold enough to assume the reins of Government (cheers). Such a precedent as that furnished by an individual, irresponsible, ~~but~~ possessing known power, and wielding an unacknowledged authority in the state, was, in the highest degree, none could deny, dangerous; and the people, on this occasion, had the right to question and complain of it (hear, hear). They had a right to complain, because it was their right, and a principle of the constitution, that, before the adoption, before even the introduction of such a sweeping change as that now to be discussed, they should be appealed to and their will expressed (cheers). Where had there been an instance in which the people had been left entirely to themselves, when their verdict had not been in favour of the Protectionist candidate? The last instance was the election in the county of Nottingham, the new member for which had not yet taken his seat, he did not know the reason why—he was elected the day before yesterday; if there could be a circumstance to convince the House that the constituency of England was sound, and that the voice of the people would make itself heard, it was the result of that election. There was a Noble Lord, with everything to recommend him, a man of honour and talent, going down avowedly patronized by the Government of which he was an ornament, with the confidence of being re-elected, telling the electors that the bill was as good as passed—that peers were every day sending in their adhesions (hear, hear)—so confident of success, that he probably wrote up to his colleagues that his re-election was sure—that the electors were hourly sending in their adhesions—and they might now ask—“Where is he?” Echo answers “where?” And the Right Hon. Baronet could not tell them where there was any hope for him. The Noble Lord having met with a defeat, after going down with so much confidence, might they not expect the same fate for this bill? (hear, hear). Was it asking too

much, when the fate of Ireland, as all admitted, did not depend upon this measure—when it was admitted that there was no reason for haste, or alarm, or anxiety? Was it too much to ask to be allowed to have the opinion of the whole constituency? The Hon. Member for Durham (Mr. Bright) had been pleasant with them (the Protectionists), observing that, for men going to execution, they were remarkably merry—reminding him of the conduct of a gentleman mentioned by Swift (Prior) in one of his ballads,

“He fitted the halter and traversed the cart,  
“And often took leave, but seemed loth to depart.”

This might turn out a false prophecy. Hatsel, referring to the responsibility of members to their constituents, says—“I will now give an authority, which no man will be inclined to dispute, Algernon Sidney, in his *Discourse on Government*, says—‘It is not on the representative of a separate constituency, but of the whole nation, that a gentleman is sent to Parliament; yet he is most strictly and properly obliged to give an account of his acts to his constituents, though the only punishment to which he will be subject for betraying his trust, is scorn, infamy, and hatred (hear, hear), and an assurance of being rejected when he again seeks the same office.’” The Hon. Member for Wolverhampton, last night, had said that he (Mr. Bankes) had expressed his alarm that such men as Neckar and Turgot should be at the head of the Government. He admitted that he did say so, and he had opened a volume of Alison’s *History of Modern Europe*, in which he found these words—“The exciting cause, as physicians would say, of the French Revolution, was the spirit of innovation which had taken hold of all classes of the people of France, particularly those whose fortunes were likely to perish with those changes, and who were likely to be the first victims.” There were Lord Lincolns at that time, and sons who were opposed to their fathers, and the system of society was destroyed. Mr. Alison describes the virtues and the failing of Turgot, and he (Mr. Bankes) might without impropriety say that he paralleled with his the faults of our present Chief Minister, and he charged him with having unduly not only avoided, but contrived (if he might use the term without personal offence) to prevent the recurrence to the public voice which would have convinced him of his error. The Noble Lord, the Member for London, would not pretend that the cause assigned for his resignation was the only cause. He stated that he found that if he had taken office, and had had the assistance of Sir R. Peel, Sir R. Peel would, very likely, have been aided by very few of his followers; whereas, on the other hand, so very patriotic were those who followed Lord John Russell, they could have carried every man to support Sir R. Peel. And that is the real English of the whole transaction, and it was much better to put it in plain English. Lord John Russell found he could have had but an uncertain support from Sir R. Peel and his followers, if Sir R. Peel was not in office; but if the Right Hon. Baronet remained in office, he (Lord J. Russell) could bring his whole force to give their aid to him, and could carry the measure boldly against the voice of the people. They had been told that the voice of the people might be heard in another way, and the Noble Lord had spoken of petitions. Upon this head, upon the

subject of petitions, they had heard a good deal to-night (hear, hear), which would induce the House not to give much weight to petitions upon this subject. As to pledges by Members, and questions put to them by electors, he thought that voters would continue to put questions and expect answers; and those who gave answers must abide by them. Unless they did away with the whole principle of elections, they would always be conducted in this manner, and they must be glad to see that Members did vacate their seats and appeal again to their constituents. Even supposing the proposed measure to be as likely to prove advantageous to the community as he apprehended it would turn out to be disadvantageous, still he should say that much greater evils would result from passing it in such a manner as was now intended, and by such means as were now contemplated, than could ever be compensated for by any possible good. Nothing could compensate for passing such a measure by the agency of such a Parliament as the present House of Commons; or by the union of parties long opposed to each other, and whose combination the country grieved to witness. He trusted, however, that in another place—he believed that in another place, delays would happen which would afford an opportunity for calling upon the people to declare their opinions upon the Corn Laws. The votes and proceedings of the House of Commons were in another place scanned and considered most carefully; and in that other place it could not have been overlooked, that large divisions in that House had affirmed votes which did not go to sanction the measure now proposed to them. He expected then that delay must ensue, and he conceived that during that delay they might counsel the Crown to appeal to the people, to know if they were parties to this great, this extraordinary, this extravagant change.

MR. B. ESCOTT said, that the question with which they had to deal was one which naturally divided itself into two parts. The first consideration was whether or not the measure would benefit the country; the second was, whether the carrying of such a measure could at the present moment be prevented. He should begin with the latter, and he did not hesitate to say, that it would at the present moment be impossible to prevent the carrying of the question. Those who represented themselves as the great advocates of the farmers should join issue with them upon that point, and give a plain answer to it. There was a third question, which he was sorry to say had occupied much more of the attention of the House than either of the other two, namely, whether (supposing the proposed alteration inevitable) it ought to be carried by those Hon. Members who sat on the right of the chair, or those who sat on the left. This he thought was an unprofitable inquiry. It was of no importance in the eyes of the people by whom the alteration was accomplished—enough for them that their objects were attained. His Hon. Friend, the Member for Somersetshire said that the people were not in want (hear, hear). He wished that his Hon. Friend had heard the statement he (Mr. Escott) had made of the condition of the people in his Hon. Friend's county. His Hon. Friend was the first person he had yet heard, who had had the hardihood to deny that the people at that moment were in want (hear, hear). He should like to know whether the people

were not in want when they were kept alive by subscriptions—when their wages were below the price of provisions. Did he think that that was a state of prosperity (hear, hear). If he would examine into these things he would not make such statements. He knew his Hon. Friend's goodness of heart—his highness of principle, and excellence of character; and if he had known the natural state of things, he could not have expressed that horror of plenty—

MR. MILES said, he was not aware of having used such an expression as "horror of plenty" (hear, hear).

MR. ESCOTT had never yet heard a speech of his Hon. Friend on this subject without it. He always dreaded the overflowing of corn or some other good things. He was always afraid of overloaded trenchers (a laugh). Those were the arguments that had opened the eyes of the people; and there was not in that House, or in the country, one person who had done more to remove restrictions from imports than his Hon. Friend; but, at the same time, there was none in that House who, if the effects of that removal were beneficial to the people, would be more rejoiced at it (hear, hear).

CAPTAIN GLADSTONE wished to state very briefly the reasons which induced him to give his vote in favour of the amendment of his Hon. Friend the Member for Somerset (hear); and the regret he felt as to being obliged to oppose Her Majesty's Ministers on so important a question as this (hear). None could feel more deeply than he did the sincerity of their motives (hear, hear); and he believed that nothing but a strong sense of public duty could have induced them to bring forward this question, and place themselves in the very painful position in which they now stood with regard to a large proportion of their former supporters (cries of "hear, hear"). He did not hold ultra views of Protection, but when they found interests in the country that had been protected for a long period, and that under Protection this country had greatly flourished, and when they also considered that the most able statesmen, and the greatest political economists had given their opinion that protection could not be suddenly withdrawn with safety, he could not think that this measure was one which ought to be supported. He considered, moreover, that this measure ought not to have been proposed by the present Government to the present Parliament (hear, hear). In the meantime, if it went into committee, there were parts of it which he should support, but, regarding it as he did, he thought it his duty to stop it on the very threshold (hear, hear).

MR. COBDEN.—I assure the House that it is impossible for me to trespass long upon their notice, but I am anxious to say a few words before the close of this long debate. I have had the good, or the ill-fortune, to listen to many debates upon this subject in this House, and although it has not been my fortune to listen to this, at all events I have had the pleasure of perusing every word of it. On former occasions I have had to complain, that although the great object and purpose of the Anti-Corn Law Motion was to discuss the principle of the Corn Laws, yet that Hon. Gentlemen always evaded the question, and tried to discuss every other rather than the particular question before the House; but, however I may have had to complain of that on former occasions, I think it will be admitted

that extraneous matter has been introduced into this debate by Hon. Gentlemen opposite to a much greater extent than before. It appears to me, that one-half of the debate has turned upon the conduct of Her Majesty's Ministers, and nearly the whole of the other half upon the necessity of a dissolution, and an appeal to the country (hear, hear). Now, though there may be ground, I will not say there may be just ground for Hon. Gentlemen below the gangway assailing the Ministers for the course they have pursued, yet the country, I assure them, will not sympathize with them in their quarrel with their leaders, nor will they be without some suspicion that that quarrel has been got up to avoid a discussion of principle (hear, hear); for I wish you to bear in mind that, on former occasions, by similar means, they did try to avoid that discussion. In 1841 they denounced the leaders of the Whigs as furiously as they denounce the leaders of their own party now; and when I came into Parliament, in the spring of 1842, I must say that I myself, and the members of the Anti-Corn Law League were as much the objects of their vituperation as the Ministers are now. The country, therefore, will not sympathize with them; and, on the other hand, it will learn whether or not they have not introduced these personal topics because they cannot justify the present law (hear, hear). I will now, however, draw your attention to the second topic to which I have referred, and which is of still more importance. If I understand your position rightly it is this—you say, "We wish for an appeal to the country; if the country decides that Free Trade shall be the national policy we will bow to that decision" ("hear, hear," from the Protectionists). I believe I am fairly interpreting your meaning. I tell you, then, in the first place, that if you are believers in the truth and justice of your principles, you are unworthy advocates of those principles if you would think of abandoning them on such grounds. If you believe in the truth of your principles you should not bow to the decision of a temporary majority of this House. When I came into Parliament, in 1841, I met you with a majority of 91 in your favour. Did I then bow to that majority and submit to the Corn Law (hear, hear). No; I said I would never cease my exertions till you abrogated that law. If you have confidence in the truth and justice of your principles you should use the same language. You should say, "It is not one defeat that shall make us abandon those great principles, which we consider essential to the welfare and prosperity of the great mass of the people. No; if we are thrown to the ground now we will spring up with renewed determination and vigour" (cheers). I ought to know as much about the state of the representation of this country, and of the registration, as any man in the House ("hear," and cheers). Probably no one has given so much attention to that question as I have done; and I distinctly deny that you have the slightest probability of gaining a numerical majority in this House if a dissolution took place to-morrow. Now, I would not have said this three months ago (hear). On the contrary, at a public meeting three months ago, I distinctly recognized the great probability of a dissolution, in consequence of your having a numerical majority. But your party is broken up (hear and laughter). Though you may still have a firm phalanx in Dorsetshire and Buckingham-

shire, what has been the effect of the separation from you of the most authoritative and intelligent of your friends? What has been the effect also of the defection in the boroughs, and among the population of the north? I told you, three years ago, that the Conservatives in the towns in the north of England were not the followers of the Duke of Richmond. They were, almost to a man, the followers of that section of the Government represented by the First Lord of the Treasury and the Right Hon. Home Secretary (hear, hear). Every one acquainted with the towns in the north of England will bear me out when I say that those Conservatives who follow the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) comprise at least four-fifths of the party, while the remaining one-fifth look up to the Duke of Richmond as their leader, and sympathize with the section below the gangway. That large portion of the Conservative party in the north of England has ever been in favour of Free Trade. The language they have used to Free Traders like myself has been this:—"Sir R. Peel will do it at the proper time (hear and cheers). We have confidence in him, and when the proper period arrives he will give us Free Trade" (renewed cheers). This country certainly will not be governed by a combination of landlords and tenants (hear). Probably you are not aware on what a very narrow basis this power of yours rests. But I can give you some information on the subject. There are about 150,000 tenants who form the basis of your political power, and who are distributed throughout the counties of this country. Well! let it come to the worst;—carry on the opposition to this measure for three years more; yet there is a plan in operation much maligned by some Hon. Gentlemen opposite ("hear, hear," from the Protection benches)—and still more maligned in another place, but which, the more the shoe pinches and the more you wince at it, the more we like it out of doors (hear, hear). Now, I say, we have confronted this difficulty, and are prepared to meet it. We are calling into exercise the true old English forms of the constitution (cries of "oh, oh!" and cheers), of five centuries' antiquity, and we intend that it should countervail this innovation of the Reform Bill (hear, hear). You think that there is something very revolutionary in this ("hear, hear," from the Protection benches). Why, you are the innovators and the revolutionists who introduced this new franchise into the Reform Bill (hear, hear). But I believe it is perfectly understood by the longest heads among your party that we have a power out of doors to meet this difficulty (hear, hear). You should bear in mind that less than one-half of the money invested in the savings-banks, laid out at better interest in the purchase of freeholds, would give qualifications to more persons than your 150,000 tenant-farmers (hear, hear). But you say that the League is purchasing votes and giving away the franchise (hear, hear). No, no; we are not quite so rich as that; but be assured that if you prolong the contest for three or four years (which you cannot do)—if, however, it comes to the worst, we have the means in our power to meet the difficulty, and are prepared to use them (hear, hear). Money has been subscribed to prepare our organization in every county, and we are prepared to meet the difficulty, and to overcome it (hear, hear). You may think that there is something repulsive

(hear) to your notions of supremacy in all this. I see a very great advantage in it, even if the Corn Laws were repealed to-morrow ("hear, hear," from the Protection benches). I think that you cannot too soon widen the basis of our county representation. I say, with respect to a man, whether he be a small shop-keeper or a mechanic, who by his prudence has saved £50 or £100, and is willing to lay it out in the purchase of a cottage or land bringing in 40s. a-year as a freehold,—I say that it is to that man of all others that I would wish to intrust the franchise (hear, hear). Let it be understood that all this extraneous matter is not of my introducing, for your debate has turned on the question of dissolution. No one can complain of my having, on this question, been guilty of often introducing irrelevant matter; I generally keep close to the argument; but you have chosen to say now that you will not settle the question by argument and by an appeal to facts and reason in this House; that you will have nothing to do with this House, but that you will go to the country. Now, I have given you some idea of what is your prospect in the country (hear, hear). I do not ask you to take my opinion for it (hear, hear); but as mischief may be averted more from yourselves—more from another place to which allusion has been made, than from others, I do ask you to take these facts home, to study them for yourselves, to look over the registry, to count the population of the towns, and then to come down and say whether you think the public opinion of the country is with you or against you? (cheers). So much of the argument has turned on this extraneous question, and what little argument has been addressed to the merits of the case has been so abundantly answered by other persons (shouts of "oh, oh," from the Protection benches), that it would be impertinent in me to trespass at too great length on the time of the House ("oh, oh"). Well, I will tell you what my thoughts were as I sat at home patiently reading these debates. As I read speech after speech, and saw the fallacies which I had knocked on the head seven years ago, re-appearing afresh, my thought was, what fun those debates will afford to the men in fustian jackets ("hear, hear," and laughter). All these fallacies are perfectly transparent to these men, and they would laugh at you for putting them forward (hear, hear). Dependence on foreigners! (laughter). Who in the world could have supposed that that long buried ghost would come again to light? (cheers and laughter). Drain of gold! (laughter). Wages rising and falling with the price of bread! (continued laughter). Throwing land out of cultivation and bringing corn here at 25s. per quarter (cheers and laughter). You forget that the great mass of the people now take a very different view on these questions from what you do (hear, hear). They formerly, seven years ago, did give in, to a certain extent, to your reiterated assertions that wages rise and fall with the price of bread. You had a very fair clap-trap against us (as we happened to be master manufacturers) in saying that we wanted to reduce wages. But the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, and the Right Hon. Baronet the Home Secretary, are not suspected by the English people of having such motives on these questions (hear, hear). The English people have no disinclination

to refer to high authorities on these matters. They assume that men high in office have access to accurate information, and they generally suppose that those men have no sinister motive for deceiving the great body of the people on a question like the present (hear, hear). You see, I do not underrate the importance of your leaders having declared in favour of Free Trade (hear, hear). On the contrary, I avow that that has caused the greatest possible accession to the ranks of the Free Traders (hear, hear). Well, then, the working classes, not believing that wages rise and fall with the price of bread, when you tell them that they are to have corn at 25s. a quarter, instead of being frightened, are rubbing their hands with satisfaction (cheers, and laughter). They are not frightened at the visions which you present to their eyes, of a big loaf; seeing that they expect to get more money and bread at half the price ("hear, hear," and a laugh). And then the danger of having your land thrown out of cultivation! Why, what would the men in smockfrocks in the south of England say to that? They would say—"We shall get our land for potato ground at a  $\frac{1}{2}d.$  a lug, instead of paying 3d. or 4d. for it (hear). These fallacies have all been disposed of; and if you lived more in the world—more in contact with public opinion, and less within that charmed circle which you think the world, but which is really anything but the world—if you gave way less to the excitement of clubs—less to the buoyancy which arises from talking to each other as to the effect of some smart speech in which a Minister has been assailed, you would see that it was mere child's play to attempt to baulk the intelligence of the country on this great question, and you would not have talked as you have talked for the last eleven days ("hear, hear," and laughter.) Now, with respect to the farmers, I will not deny that you have a large portion of the farmers clinging to you landlords on this question. They have been talked to and frightened by their landlords, as children by their nurses, and they dread some hideous prospect or some old bogie, ready to start up before their eyes (laughter). They do not know what is to happen, but they have not strict and implicit faith in you. They are afraid lest anything should happen to render them unable to make terms with the landlords in the matter of rent; or otherwise they are perfectly easy and willing to receive Free Trade to-morrow ("hear, hear," and laughter). They are afraid of how the adjustment might be conducted; and the question, therefore, I have no hesitation in saying, is a landlord's question. On this subject the farmers have had some hints given them in the following paragraph, which appeared some time ago in the *Standard* newspaper:—"Under what head, then, is the farmer to look for relief? Under the head rent. The landlord must reduce rent, but the farmer knows, by rather bitter experience, the process by which this reduction must be effected. He must be first himself rendered unable to pay rent, and then the landlord will give way, and not before." This is the character given by the *Standard* newspaper of the landlords, and in this consists the great difficulty with the farmers. I do not think that the farmers generally believe all that you have told them. I believe that farms let as high now as ever they did. There is something remarkable in this. Since the Right Hon. Baronet has

proposed his measure, I have directed my attention to this point, because I conceive that it solves much of our difficulty. I have inquired of land agents, land proprietors, lawyers, &c., as to whether land has suffered any depreciation in value in consequence of the proposition on this subject made by the Government? Now, it is remarkable that though silks have been rendered almost unsaleable, and though the proposed change has produced almost a paralysis in every trade touched, yet land is letting and selling for higher prices than ever (hear, hear). Now, I will give you an example; I will mention a case, and I am at liberty to mention the name. The Hon. Member for Somerset will corroborate what I am going to state. Mr. Gordon, a near neighbour of the Hon. Member, has had sixty farms, and he made the tenants an offer that he would take their land off their hands on equitable terms at Lady-day; yesterday was the last day for giving notice of accepting his offer and not one farmer proposed to do so (hear, hear). I think it is not very complimentary to the Hon. Member for Somerset; Mr. Gordon is a near neighbour of his, and his tenants of course have been favoured to hear some of those eloquent addresses which the Hon. Member has made in Somerset, wherein he has told them that land will not be worth cultivation at all, or, at least, that there will be such an avalanche of corn from the continent and from America as will quite supersede the cultivation, and yet these farmers seem to have so little alarm that they are willing to hold their farms at their present rents (hear, hear). Let me read you too the account that is given me by a gentleman in the city, an eminent solicitor, whom I have known for some years, and who is largely interested in landed property:—"I have for many years been connected with the management of landed property, and with the purchase and letting of estates in several different counties, and am at this time negotiating for the renewal of leases and letting of lands in Bedfordshire, Herts, and Essex. In the latter county the tenant who has occupied a farm of 500 acres for fourteen years under a lease, and who has always spoken of his rent as somewhat high, and of his own farming as the best in his own neighbourhood, has now offered a considerable increase of rent (fifteen per cent.) for a new lease of fourteen years, and to covenant to underdrain two-thirds of the farm, the landlord finding draining tiles, now acknowledging that the cultivation may be greatly improved, so as to meet the increase of rent. The farmer has another occupation, and is not, therefore, under any fear of being without a farm. He is a Protectionist in words, and a supporter of Sir John Tyrrell. Under the rumour that this farm might be given up, there were eight or ten most respectable applicants for it. In Hertfordshire I am at this moment renewing leases upon two large farms, both with the offer of increased rents and with covenants for greatly improved cultivation, particularly as to under-draining. In Bedfordshire upon two moderate-sized farms the same has been the result, and on the application for one of them, which the farmer is quitting in consequence of age and infirmity, the following conversation took place on the application to me, by an intelligent farmer, for the farm:—I understand, Sir, that you have the letting of Mr. L.'s farm, as he is quitting.—I have. I should like

to have the offer of it. My name is —, and I can refer you to the clergyman of my parish, and to several gentlemen, for my character and responsibility. You are, I presume, a farmer? Yes, Sir, I have one farm, and should like another to extend my occupation, as I have sufficient capital. You know the farm, I presume, and the rent which the present tenant pays. Yes, Sir, I know the farm and the rent; and as we are no longer to have any protection, and the Corn Laws must now be repealed, I hope you will consider that point in the rent. Pray, as you say that the Corn Laws will be repealed, what in your judgment will be the effect? Why, Sir, the first will be the waking up of thousands of farmers who have hitherto been asleep (cheers); and we must look to increased efforts and increased production (renewed cheers). With respect to rent, I must have a small increase, and I must require covenants for better cultivation, more especially as to under-draining, which must be done very extensively? Sir, my intention is, if I have the farm, to under-drain the whole of it, being allowed tiles. Well, as you are a man of observation, and acquainted with different districts in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Herts, tell me whether I am right (so far as your observation goes) in saying, that under improved cultivation one-third more corn can be grown and the sample much better? I have no doubt that you are right. Then, if I am right, what have you to fear from the abolition of the Corn Law? Nothing at all, Sir (cheers). This person has hired the farm at an increased rent, and undertaken to under-drain the whole if required by the landlord so to do" (renewed cheers). Now, Hon. Gentlemen must, of course, be better able than I can be to judge from their own experience whether this be a fair statement of the case or not; but I would put it to them, are any of them prepared to sell their own estates for one farthing less now than they were twelve months ago? (cries of "hear, hear"). But if farmers will take the land at the same rent, and if you will not take less than thirty years' purchase now upon the present rental, where are the proofs that you are in earnest in all that you predict as the consequences of the Repeal of the Corn Laws? (cheers). Nay, this is a proof that there has been a system of mutual self-delusion, or mutual deception between you and the farmers (cries of "order," "hear, hear"). You have preached doctrines which the farmer has affected to believe, but which neither of you has believed at heart ("order, order"). Either you have been doing this jointly, doing it that you might practise upon the credulity of your countrymen, or else you are now pursuing a most unworthy and inconsistent course, because after telling the farmers at your Protection meetings that wheat is to be sold at 30s. or 35s. a quarter, and that they cannot carry on their business in competition with the Russians and the Poles, even if they have their land rent free, with what face can you now let your land to farmers at the existing rents? (cheers). But the truth is, that you all know—that the country knows—that there never was a more monstrous delusion than to suppose that that which goes to increase the trade of the country and to extend its manufactures and commerce,—that which adds to our numbers, increases our population, enlarges the number of your customers, and diminishes your burdens by multiplying the shoulders that are to bear them, and

giving them increased strength to bear them, can possibly tend to diminish the value of land (hear). You may affect the value of silks, you may affect the value of cottons or woollens; transitory changes of fashion may do that—changes of taste; but there is a taste for land inherent in human kind, and especially is it the desire of Englishmen to possess land (hear hear), and therefore, whilst you have a monopoly of that article which our very instincts lead us to desire to possess, if you see any process going on by which our commerce and our numbers are increased, it is impossible to suppose that it can have the effect of diminishing the value of the article that is in your hands (cheers). What, then, is the good of this “Protection!” What is this boasted “Protection?” Why, the country have come to regard it, as they regard witchcraft, as a mere sound and a delusion (a laugh). They no more regard your precautions against Free Trade than they regard the horse-shoes that are nailed over stables, to keep the witches away from the horses (laughter). They do not believe Protection; they have no fear of Free Trade; and they are laughing to scorn all the arguments by which you are trying to frighten them. How can Protection, think you, add to the wealth of a country? Can you by legislation add one farthing to the wealth of the country? You may, by legislation, in one evening, destroy the fruits and accumulations of a century of labour (cheers from the Protection benches), but I defy you to show me how, by the legislation of this House, you can add one farthing to the wealth of this country. That springs from the industry and intelligence of the people of this country. You cannot guide that intelligence; you cannot do better than leave it to its own instincts. If you attempt by legislation to give any direction to trade or industry, it is a thousand to one that you are doing wrong; and if you happen to be right, it is a work of supererogation; for the parties for whom you legislate would go right without you, and better than with you (hear, hear). Then if this is true, why should there be any difference of opinion between us? Hon. Gentlemen may think that I have spoken hardly to them on this occasion; but I want to see them come to a better conclusion on this question. I believe, if they will look the thing in the face, and divest themselves of that crust of prejudice that oppresses them, we shall all be better friends about it (hear). There are but two things that can prevent it; one is their believing that they have a sinister interest in this question, and therefore not looking into it; and the other is, an incapacity for understanding political economy (“hear, hear,” and a laugh”). I know there are many heads who cannot comprehend and master a proposition in political economy; I believe that study is the highest exercise of the human mind, and that the exact sciences require by no means so hard an effort. But barring these two accidents, want of capacity, and having a sinister interest, I defy any man to look into this question honestly and come to any other than one conclusion (cheers). Then why should we not agree? I want no triumph in this matter for the Anti-Corn Law League; I want you to put an end, from conviction, to an evil system (hear, hear). Come down to us, and let us hold a Free Trade Meeting in our Hall at Manchester; come to us now, Protectionists, and let us see whether

we cannot do something better for our common country than carrying on this strife of parties (cheers). Let us once for all recognize this principle, that we must not tax one another for the benefit of one another (renewed cheers). Now, I am going to read you an authority that will astonish you. I am going to read you an extract from a speech of the Duke of Wellington in the House of Lords on the 17th of April, 1832; it is his opinion on taxation:—"He thought taxes were imposed only for the service of the state. If they were necessary for the service of the state, in God's name, let them be paid, but if they were not necessary they ought not to be paid, and the Legislature ought not to impose them." Now there that Noble Duke, without having had time to study Adam Smith or Ricardo, by that native sagacity which is characteristic of his mind, came at once to the marrow of this question (hear, hear). We must not tax another for the benefit of one another. Oh, then, divest the future Prime Minister of this country of that odious task of having to reconcile rival interests; divest the office, if ever you would have a sagacious man in power as Prime Minister, divest it of the responsibility of having to find food for the people! May you never find a Prime Minister again to undertake that awful responsibility! That responsibility belongs to the law of nature; as Burke said, it belongs to God alone to regulate the supply of the food of nations. When you shall have seen in three years that the abolition of these laws is inevitable, you will be obliged then to meet the wishes of the farmer, and dissolve the League, as in good faith it will be dissolved (loud cries of "hear, hear," from the Protection benches). I say that when you find it to be inevitable, as inevitable it is, you will come forward and join with the Free Traders (cheers and laughter); for if you do not, you will have the farmers coming forward and agitating in conjunction with the League (cheers). You are in a position to gain honour in future; you are in a position, especially the young Members among you who have the capacity to learn the truth of this question, they are in a position to gain honour in this struggle; but as you are going on at present, your position is a false one, you are in the wrong groove, and are every day more and more diverging from the right point. It may be material for you to get right notions of political economy; questions of that kind will form a great part of the world's legislation for a long time to come (hear, hear). We are on the eve of great changes (cheers and counter-cheers). Put yourselves in a position to be able to help in the work, and so gather honour and fame where they are to be gained. You belong to the aristocracy of the human kind—not the privileged aristocracy, I don't mean that, but the aristocracy of improvement and civilization. We have set an example to the world in all ages; we have given them the representative system. Why, the very rules and regulations of this House have been taken as the model for every representative assembly throughout the whole civilized world; and having besides given them the example of a free press and civil and religious freedom, and every institution that belongs to freedom and civilization, we are now about giving a still greater example; we are going to set the example of making industry free (cheers)—to set the example of giving the whole world every advantage of climate,

and latitude and situation ; relying ourselves on the freedom of our industry. Yes, we are going to teach the world that other lesson. Don't think there is anything selfish in this, or anything at all discordant with Christian principles. I can prove that we advocate nothing but what is agreeable to the highest behests of Christianity. To buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest. What is the meaning of the maxim ? It means that you take the article which you have in the greatest abundance, and obtain from others that of which they have the most to spare, so giving to mankind the means of enjoying the fullest abundance of earth's goods, and in doing so carrying out to the fullest extent the Christian doctrine of "Doing to all men as ye would they should do unto you" (loud and prolonged cheering).

MR. SPOONER said, the Hon. Member who had just sat down had said that this debate was the fullest of extraneous matter of any he had ever known. The Hon. Member seemed determined to furnish an instance in his own speech, at the beginning of which any one who had dropped into the House, might have supposed that he was discussing the Reform Bill, and the propriety of the £50 clause. But he (Mr. Spooner) would ask whether a £50 tenant-at-will was not as well qualified and had not as good a right to vote as a £10 householder ? (cheers). He would also ask the Hon. Member, when he spoke of the influence exerted by the landlords over their tenantry, whether he did not know that very much the same influence was exercised in quite as objectionable a manner by the master-manufacturers over their dependants. The Hon. Member had told the House that the landlords did not understand their position, that their authority rested on a very narrow basis, and that they would not have a majority in case of a dissolution. The present Parliament, he maintained, had been specially called to decide the question of protection to corn. An appeal was made to the nation to ascertain their opinion on that point, and what was the result ? Why, a majority of 90 and upwards in favour of protection. Since that time, however, the great leaders of the Protection party had changed their opinions ; their colleagues had also changed their opinions ; and when men of such well-known integrity of character, and such eminent station, changed their opinions, they necessarily carried with them a large portion of the public. It was important, therefore, to ascertain whether the change was confined to the Ministry and their adherents, or whether the public sympathized with them (hear, hear.) The Hon. Member then proceeded amidst considerable manifestations of impatience, to deny that in voting against going into Committee on this question he flinched from inquiry. If the proposition of the Right Hon. Gentleman (Sir R. Peel) had been to go into Committee on the Corn Laws, with a view to their modification, to that proposition he would have given his most unqualified consent, especially if it had been with a view to the adoption of a fixed duty, which he considered to be the only system which could now be rationally maintained ; but he objected to going into Committee just now, because by doing so he would be pledged to the principle of a total repeal (continued expressions of impatience). The Hon. Member then proceeded to read a passage from a work written by Lord John Russell, but, in

consequence of the noise that prevailed in the House, he was wholly inaudible in the gallery. The Hon. Gentleman was afterwards proceeding to make some further observations, but the cries of "Divide" became so loud that the Hon. Member yielded to the wish of the House, and sat down.

MR. P. BORTHWICK, who was received with loud shouts of "Oh ! oh !" observed, that he could not give a silent vote on this occasion, and hoped to be permitted to make a very brief statement to the House. He considered that the question with that House and the constituencies who had sent them there, was not whether they ought to support her Majesty's Government, but whether the measure which Government had submitted to the House was a right or a wrong measure. He (Mr. Borthwick) had done his utmost towards overthrowing the Government of which the Noble Lord opposite was the leader in that House, and his opinions still remained unchanged. Had he changed them he would have felt himself bound to give his constituents an opportunity of expressing their sentiments on the subject. He had, however, not been convinced by the arguments of either of the Right Hon. Gentlemen, and he should therefore vote against this measure. He condemned the policy of the Government as a gross insult to common sense, because, allowing Protection to be the "bane of agriculture," it proposed to continue that bane for three years longer. The Hon. Gentleman concluded by declaring his belief that though the Free Trade party had the head of the Right Hon. Baronet, they, the Protectionists, still possessed his heart. Throughout the whole of the Hon. Gentleman's address, the impatience of the House was extreme.

LORD G. BENTINCK asked the patience of the House while he endeavoured to answer some of the arguments that had been used on the other side. No man there felt more deeply his total unworthiness to ask that indulgence. As long as he had been in Parliament he had never ventured to trespass on the time of the House on any question of importance. They did not object to the present measure on account of the change it proposed to make with regard to agriculture; but it affected 1,100 articles of commerce; it was a great commercial revolution. They did not object only to the removal of protection from the agricultural interest, but to its removal from the silk trade, the shipping interest, and many other interests affected by the proposed tariff. The Right Hon. Secretary at War had called on the agricultural interest to accept this great change, while in his opinion it could be accepted, and before it should be extorted from them by force, and with the loss of character, station, and influence with the country. Would to God, he thought, it could be carried by this House of Commons consistent with its honour (hear, hear). While he thought it would be deeply injurious to all the great interests of the country, he confessed he thought it could only be carried by this Parliament with the loss of character, station, and influence with the country of many Gentlemen who sat on that side of the House. He willingly conceded to Gentlemen opposite that their honour was not concerned; they had been and still were the consistent advocates of Free Trade in corn, and in that House they redeemed the pledges they made when soliciting the suffrages

of the people (cheers). He was at a loss to understand upon what the Right Hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War based the extraordinary assertion that the present was not a Protection Parliament (cheers). Was it not, emphatically, upon the question whether they were to have the protection of a fixed duty of 8s. or a still higher protection, that, in 1841, her Majesty appealed to the people? There was no mistake about that fact (hear). It was not only the Right Hon. Gentleman now at the head of the Government, and then the leader of the Opposition, that could challenge his opponents and charge them that they were going to dissolve Parliament on the cry of "Cheap Bread" (cheers); his Right Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department followed in his wake, and it was the latter that charged the then existing Government not only with that offence, but with "the malice of the Devil himself" (cheers and laughter). That Right Hon. Gentleman quoted at the time a speech addressed by Mr. Tierney to Mr. Canning in 1807, and in which the speaker charged that Minister with dissolving Parliament on the cry of "the Church in danger," and when ironically cheered for the quotation by the Noble Lord the Member for the city of London, the Right Hon. Bart. said that, bad as such a cry was, it was not half so maddening to an excited populace as the cry for "Cheap Bread" when raised from the Treasury benches (hear, hear). What cry was raised now from the Treasury benches? Had they not heard the old cry for "Cheap Bread," and had not pathetically and patriotically the Right Hon. Baronet declared that the question being a landlord's question, he would not consent to eke out his rents from the sufferings of the people (cheers). All knew the history of the dissolution of the last Parliament—of the vote of "No confidence,"—of the speech from the throne, in which her Majesty said, alluding to the Corn Laws, that on a question of such paramount importance to the trade and industry of the country, she had availed herself of the constitutional privilege of appealing to her people (cheers); and, when all that was borne in mind, it was not whether this member or that member was pledged to Protection, but it was that every member was, by that speech from the throne, bound to support that principle of national policy (cheers, and cries of "oh!"). The present House of Commons could not, therefore, carry any measure for the removal of protection to agriculture without immediate dishonour and lasting disgrace (loud cheers). The country, they might rely upon it, would not be satisfied with a three years' experiment of a system; and the Right Hon. Gentleman, therefore, argued to no purpose if he founded his belief of the efficacy of his changes on the experience alone of those few years. He had challenged the House to produce one single instance of failure either to the consumers or producers following upon a relaxation of duties, and he (Lord G. Bentinck) was ready to meet that challenge. They had heard the Hon. Member for Birmingham (Mr. Muntz), who was declared to be the manufacturer of no less than a seventh part of the whole manufacture of spelter in Great Britain, state, that the result, upon the producers of spelter and zinc of the relaxation of the duty upon the foreign importation of those articles, had been the ruin of every concern engaged in that manufacture in its raw state (hear).

That was one instance. Wool, strange to say, after a three years' experience, was to afford a reason for repealing the duty on Corn; whereas, in his speech in 1839, a speech never to be forgotten, the state of the trade, after twenty years' experience, was used by his Right Hon. Friend as an excellent argument why they should maintain the duty on corn. From the time when the duty of 6*d.* per lb. was placed on wool in December, 1819, to December, 1824, the price of wool remained steady and unvarying, at 1*s.* 6*d.* per lb. On the removal of the duty, in 1824, the price of wool did not rise; on the contrary, it fell in 1826 to 1*s.* per lb.; in 1827, it was 9*d.*; in 1828, it was 9*d.*; and in 1829, it was 9*d.* Thus he disposed of the argument respecting wool. When the 6*d.* duty was imposed, it did not interfere with the prosperity of the import trade, for, in 1820, the quantity imported was 10,000,000 lbs., and, in 1824, it was 22,000,000 lbs. In 1835, the price of wool was 1*s.* 10*d.*; in 1836, 1*s.* 8*d.*; in 1837, 1*s.* 9*d.*; in 1838, 1*s.* 4*d.*; and in 1839, 1*s.* 3*d.* [The Noble Lord, in this part of his speech, dropped his voice so much, apparently from exhaustion, that he was scarcely audible.] In the course of the present discussion great reliance appeared to have been placed upon the supposed advantages which had been derived from a Free Trade in silk; but if the House only looked at the state of the silk trade during the years which elapsed between 1823 and 1845, they must see that that part of the argument on the other side had most signally failed. There were, as many Hon. Members well knew, three descriptions of silk, namely, raw silk, thrown silk, and the description of silk called dubs and husks. But it unfortunately happened that the supporters of the Government, in dealing with this part of the subject, had so confounded the three descriptions of silk, that nothing like an intelligible or satisfactory argument could be derived from the information laid before the House on that subject, and the result had been quite deceptive. He did not mean to use harsh language, but he could not help saying that the whole matter was an absolute delusion. Nothing could be more distinct from each other than were the three descriptions of silk; they were different in quality, and they paid separate rates of duty. Raw silk paid 5*s.* 6*d.*, thrown silk 14*s.* 8*d.*, while the duty on manufactured silk amounted to a prohibition; and yet that was the trade upon which so much reliance had been placed as affording the best justification of the commercial policy which the Right Hon. Baronet recommended to the House. He should now call the attention of Hon. Members to the operation of Free Trade upon the silk weavers, by bringing before them some portion of the evidence upon this subject, given before the committee of 1832. One witness was asked whether there was a change in the condition of the silk weavers in consequence of this change? and the reply was, very great; not only had there been a reduction of wages, but they had discharged a great many hands; many of these were women, some of whom had gone to the workhouse, whilst others, it was feared, had gone into a state of prostitution. And in reply to the question, in what way the deficiency in the earnings was made up, the reply was, that those who continued to be employed suffered great privations. Mr. Brocklehurst, a Member of the House, was

also examined, and he said that the workmen had been living in furnished houses, and had been amply provided for; at first they fell back on their little properties, which were gradually disposed of, and they were then reduced to a state of destitution; hundreds were without a change of clothes, many were without beds, with their clothes drawn over them; and at that time two-thirds of the people wanted the common necessities of life. That was what Free Trade had done for the silk weavers (cheers and counter cheers). The duties had been reduced to a duty of about 30 per cent., but wages had been reduced to one half of their former amount. Up to 1823, when wages were regulated by act of Parliament, the men earned 2s. 4d. a day. In 1845, those wages were reduced to 1s. 2d., and they had received notice last Thursday week, that it was intended, in consequence of the reduction of duty, to reduce the wages from 1s. 2d. down to 1s. (hear, hear); and the workmen, in their petition, declared the experience of twenty-five years had convinced them that cheap bread was of no use to man, woman, or child, unless they could earn good wages ("hear, hear," and cries for a division). Hon. Members must recollect that he was now acting with a party whose leaders had deserted them, and if he could not use his arguments with the same skill as Hon. Gentlemen on the Treasury benches, he trusted the House would show him their indulgence, not for himself, but for the sake of the great interests whose cause he supported (cheers). There had been a reduction in the wages on each piece of 3d. a yard, so that at the end of a year a man would earn 128s. less; and, as the estimate was that each man consumed one quarter of wheat a year, he left the House to decide how the weaver could maintain himself, his wife, and three children on his reduced wages; and he would ask what must be the difference in the price of wheat to enable the man to live with a loss of 3d. a yard on his manufacture? (hear, hear). The silk weavers would be better off on their old wages, with corn at 70s. a quarter, than with their reduced wages, even though there might be a reduction in the price of wheat, as the Right Hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on the 10th of June last, assured the House there would be on the opening of the trade, to 45s. a quarter. Great stress had been laid on the fact that opening the trade in corn would be beneficial to the rate of wages, and for the first time they had heard it laid down from the Treasury benches that the rate of wages had nothing to do with the price of corn; though he remembered an address to the landlords of England in which his Right Hon. Friend had laid down the proposition that the rate of wages necessarily assimilated itself to the price of corn. What had been the effect of wages when corn had fallen from 100s. to 50s.? Had not wages fallen also? But what was the effect of that in Ireland? His Right Hon. Friend had told them that there was always the greatest distress there when provisions were cheapest (hear, hear), for then the farmer was without a market, the labourer without the means of purchase and without employment; and then came a scene of famine and destitution, and the application of legal force to prevent bloodshed. That was the picture drawn by the Right Hon. Baronet of the consequences of

the low price of food in 1822 (hear, hear). He could not pass over the speech of the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton. He must say it did not overflow with the milk of human kindness (hear, hear); and when the Hon. Gentleman came forward and gave his evidence of his conduct, and motives, and intentions towards the agricultural interest, he thought the Hon. Gentleman might, to use a term well known in Westminster-hall, be sworn on the *voir dire* (hear); for he was receiving a fine salary, though he did not come within the category of annuitants and tax-gatherers, who rejoiced in the increasing value of money (hear). It had been said that Hon. Gentlemen on his side of the question had made use of no arguments, but he thought that the speech of his Honourable Friend near him (Mr. S. O'Brien) was full of argument, and had received no answer. The Right Hon. Baronet had thought fit to sneer at his Hon. Friend (hear, hear), but when the Right Hon. Baronet went down to Drayton Manor and looked over his large property, and thought that at no distant period it had belonged to the old landed interest of the country, (cries of "oh, oh!") he might remember that there was a measure passed in 1819, which was said to have added half a million sterling to the fortunes of his family (cries of "oh, oh! order, order"), and he might feel that he had not dealt fairly with the landed interest. He recollected the Right Hon. Baronet somewhere about 1842 went to Tamworth, and addressed his tenantry, and that he then hinted at the destruction of rabbits and hares, and even went the length of saying something about long leases, and that he had really granted one lease of a farm; but he did not remember to have heard that the Right Honourable Baronet, after exciting the expectations of the farmers, said one word about advancing any capital, or a reduction of rent. His practice was against all his professions (loud cries of "question, question," and "divide"). As to the apprehension of scarcity, he could refer to documents to show that in Glasgow alone the stock of wheat exceeded by far that of any preceding year. In reply to the charge that the landowners were indifferent whether the people were in a state of starvation or not, the Noble Lord denied that there was any danger of famine. He read extracts from several letters from Scotland, which represented the corn crops as of good quality, and the country as "completely choked with good potatoes," and that so far from there being any likelihood of a famine, the country was literally labouring under repletion (laughter, and "hear, hear"). He had also received a letter from Liverpool in December, which treated the idea of a famine as a mistaken notion, and stated that there were no less than two hundred warehouses in that town crammed as full of corn as ever they could hold ("hear," and a laugh). He might observe that the Hon. Member for Somersetshire had moved, five weeks ago, for a return of the prices for potatoes in all the markets in Ireland, but that return had not yet been laid upon the table. The Right Hon. Bart. (Sir R. Peel) had entered into a long statement relative to the potato disease, which was distasteful to many Hon. Gentlemen on that side, not on account of the length of its details, but because it appeared to them that the Right Hon. Gentleman did not tell them the whole truth (a laugh). The Right Hon. Baronet had read seve-

ral letters and communications on this subject, and, among others, one from a Mr. Wood of Yorkshire. He knew something of that county; and he might state that his Hon. Friend the Member for Leeds (Mr. W. Beckett) had some time since made a communication on the subject to the late Lord Wharncliffe, stating that there was no foundation for the report that the potatoes in Yorkshire were seriously affected with the disease. That was not a private communication and had therefore probably been brought under the notice of her Majesty's Government. The Right Hon. Bart. had read several accounts relative to the condition of the potato crop in Ireland from inspectors of police and others occupying official situations. Why had the Right Hon. Baronet not read the report of the Lord-Lieutenant of Carlow? A Nobleman whose opinions were entitled to the greatest weight, Lord Besborough, had also taken great pains to ascertain the truth as regards the disease among the potatoes in Ireland, and he understood that a report was made by him to the Government. That had not been read, and what was distasteful to Hon. Gentlemen near him was, that the Right. Hon. Baronet had not told both sides of the case (cheers). With respect to Antrim, an Hon. Friend of his, the Member for that county, if he were in the House, would, he was sure, state that the disease was not so bad there as had been represented, and he understood that there was no disease in Roscommon. In Tyrone, he had been informed that the price of potatoes was 3*d.* per stone, and in Tipperary, 4½*d.* per stone, whereas they were last year in Tipperary 10*d.* per stone ("hear," and loud cries of "divide"). He must say, that though the debate had lasted three weeks, he believed that he was the only gentleman who had entered at large into the real question ("hear," and cries of "oh!"). The Right Hon. Baronet had read a statement with respect to Queen's County. A few days ago, he (Lord G. Bentinck) saw his Hon. Friend the Member for Queen's County, who assured him that he had received a letter from the Lord-Lieutenant of that county, stating that the price of potatoes there was 2¾*d.* a stone, and that the disease was only partial (cries of "divide"). They were going to repeal the Corn Laws on the ground that a great calamity was impending over Ireland. Shew them that there was that calamity, and he would venture to say that the Hon. Members sitting near him would be found behind no gentlemen in England in endeavours to mitigate it (hear, hear). With respect to Galway, he had been told by the Marquis of Clanricarde that the potato disease had been most extremely exaggerated; that there were here and there bad potatoes; but that they would not have been noticed if it had not been for the cry raised; that one-half of the mischief had been created by the Government Commissioners, who had advised the lifting of the potatoes before they were ripe; and any one of common sense would have known that under such circumstances they must have rotted; that the Government and the Commissioners together had excited such a panic about the potatoes that all persons rushed to destroy their potatoes; that even he (the Marquis of Clanricarde) had been so far biassed as to feed his horses and cattle, and every other animal that would eat them, with potatoes; if there were a scarcity, it had been in a great degree occasioned by the bad advice of

the Commissioners and the Government (hear, hear). But they were told that 4,000,000 of the Irish people were on the brink of famine. If the Government believed that to be the case, he wished to know what provision they had made for these 4,000,000 of people? To subsist, then, for three months it would take 1,000,000 quarters of corn; and yet the only provision made did not exceed 100,000 quarters of maize (hear, hear). He (Lord G. Bentinck) did not believe it was intended to feed the Irish people on wheat, the grain resorted to would be oats; but then it was most unwise to allow 100,000 quarters to be exported from Ireland in January (hear). What said the Duke of Wellington? Why, that he saw no necessity for opening the ports, because in case of a famine price they opened themselves, and that, in fact, there was not a deficiency of food in Ireland. According to Lord Cloncurry, also, there had been oats enough in Ireland to feed the entire population (hear, hear). There never was an occasion in which Government presumed to make a great change, and gave so little information to the country (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) read some returns as to potatoes, but omitted to read the parts which would have shown that the crop was at first beyond an average, and at last only damaged to the extent of one-fifth; and that the price in most parts was but  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$  a stone, or little more than half what it had been in various countries (hear, hear). And how would Repeal of the Corn Laws three years hence help this emergency? (hear, hear). Indeed, if the Government was to interpose by purchasing corn, what harm was there in paying duty on it, for the duty was paid to themselves (hear, hear). The Noble Lord then proceeded to contend that, so far from "Protection being the bane of agriculture," as had been affirmed, agriculture had made the greatest progress under that system,—and that there were not the least grounds for alarm as to want of food to meet the yearly increase of the population, seeing that of late years the extra amount of corn produced per acre had more than kept pace with that increase; that there was as little ground of alarm for the future, considering the quantity of land in Ireland that yet remained to be brought under cultivation. England produced more food in proportion than the countries around her. Her produce was 28 bushels an acre, while that of France was 14, Holland 23, and America only 15 bushels an acre. If they wished to add to the comforts of the people, he contended that they ought to take the duties off tea and sugar, particularly as those articles did not come into competition with the produce of this country (hear, hear). The countries, too, that produced those articles were friendly to our industry, and received our manufactures to a great extent. This was particularly the case as regarded China. And it should be borne in mind that those who were our rivals in the Chinese market admitted tea without charging any duty at all. If they were a proud aristocracy, he trusted they should show by their votes that night that they were proud in the chastity of their honour, and that if they were parties to turning out the Whigs in 1841, they did so in simple-mindedness and honesty of heart (cheers and laughter).

The House divided at twenty minutes to three o'clock. The numbers were:—

For Mr. Miles's amendment	..	...	...	240
Against it	...	...	...	337
				<hr/>
Majority in favour of Ministers	...	...		97

The announcement was received with loud cheering, and the House then went, *pro formâ*, into committee upon the Customs Duties Act.

Adjourned at twenty minutes past three o'clock on Saturday morning.

### ANALYSIS OF THE DIVISION.

THE following is a tabulated statement of the total number of Boroughs and Borough Electors, represented by the majority and minority who voted for and against Sir Robert Peel's measure :—

FOR.			AGAINST.		
BOROUGHES.		Aggregate No. of Electors.	BOROUGHES.		Aggregate No. of Electors.
English & Welsh	122	230,356	English & Welsh	41	28,712
Irish ... ..	25	21,938	Irish .....	2	1,906
Scotch .....	19	34,079	Scotch .....	1	650
		<hr/>			<hr/>
		286,373			31,268

### AGGREGATE ANALYSIS OF BOROUGH AND COUNTY MEMBERS ON BOTH SIDES.

AGGREGATE No. OF					FOR.	AGAINST.
County Members	...	...	...	...	67	149
Borough Members, England and Wales	...	...	...	...	190	55
Irish Borough Members	...	...	...	...	27	3
Scotch Borough Members	...	...	...	...	21	1
Neutralists	...	...	...	...	34	34
<hr/>					<hr/>	<hr/>
Total...	...	...	...	...	339	242

The following is the party analysis of the division :—

Liberals for	...	...	...	227
" Absentees	...	...	...	30
" Pairs	...	...	...	11
" Against	...	...	...	11
Vacant (Mayo)	...	...	...	1
Speaker	...	...	...	1
				<hr/> 281
Conservatives for	...	...	...	112
" Against	...	...	...	231
" Pairs	...	...	...	13
" Absent	...	...	...	15
Vacant—Notts (2)...				
Bridport	...	...	...	4
Wigan	...	...	...	
Disfranchised, Salisbury	...	...	...	2
				<hr/> 658
Total	...	...	...	658

#### COUNTY MEMBERS.

For going into Committee.	County.	
Acheson, Viscount	Armagh	
Acland, T. Dyke	West Somersetshire	
Dickinson, F. H.	ditto	
Langton, Wm. Gore	East Somersetshire	
Anson, Hon. Colonel	South Staffordshire	
Russell, J. D. Watts	North ditto	
Baillie, Henry James	Inverness-shire	
Bowes, John	South Durham	
Vane, Lord H. G.	ditto	
Browne, Robt. Dillon	Mayo	
Browne, Hon. Wm.	Kerry	
O'Connell, Morgan J.	ditto	
Butler, Col. Pierce	Kilkenny	
Butler, Pierce S.	ditto	
Byng, George	Middlesex	
Wood, Lt-Col. Thos.	ditto	
Carew, Hon. R. S.	Waterford	
Cavendish, Hon. G. H.	North Derbyshire	
Evans, William	ditto	
Chapman, B. J.	Westmeath	
Clements, Lord	Leitrim	
White, Samuel	ditto	
Clive, Hon. Robt. H.	South Shropshire	Newport, 1
	North ditto	Clive, Visc
	ditto	Gore, Wm

## COUNTY MEMBERS—(Continued).

For going into Committee.	County.	Against.
Corbally, M. E.	Meath	
Corry, Hon. H. T. L.	Tyrone	
Hamilton, Lord C.	ditto	
Dalrymple, Capt. John	Wigtonshire	
Dawson, Hon. T. V.	Louth	
Dugdale, W. Stratford	North Warwickshire	Newdegate, C. N.
	South ditto	Brook, Lord S.
	ditto	Shirley, Evelyn John
Dundas, David	Sutherlandshire	
Egerton, Lord F.	South Lancashire	Entwisle, William
Patten, John Wilson	North ditto	Clifton, John Talbot
Drummond, H. H.	Perthshire	
Egerton, W. Tatton	North Cheshire	
Lagh, George C.	ditto	
	South Cheshire	Egerton, Sir P.
	ditto	Tollemache, John
Fitzgerald, R. A.	Tipperary	
Glynne, Sir S. R.	Flintshire	
Hatton, Capt. V. F.	Wexford	
Power, James	ditto	
Herbert, Hon. Sidney	South Wilts	Benett, John
	North Wilts	Long, Walter
	ditto	Sotheron, T. H. S.
Howard, Hon. C. W. G.	East Cumberland	
James, William	ditto	
	West Cumberland	Irton, Samuel
	ditto	Stanley, Edward
Howard, Sir Ralph	Wicklow	Acton, Col. W.
Johnson, J. J. H.	Dumfriesshire	
Lambton, Hedworth	North Durham	Liddell, Hon. H. T.
Lemon, Sir C.	West Cornwall	
Pendarves, E. W. W.	ditto	
	East Cornwall	Carew, Wm. H. P.
	ditto	Rashleigh, William
Lockhart, E. A.	Selkirkshire	
Macnamara, W. N.	Clare	
McNeill, Duncan	Argyllshire	
Morpeth, Lord	W. Riding, Yorkshire	Denison, E. B.
	E. Riding, Yorkshire	Broadley, H.
	ditto	Hotham, Lord
	N. Riding, Yorkshire	Cayley, E. S.
	ditto	Duncombe, Hon. O.
Morison, Maj. Gen. W.	Clackmannan and Kinross-shire	
O'Connell, Daniel	Cork	
O'Connor Don, The	Roscommon	
O'Ferrall, R. M.	Kildare	

## COUNTY MEMBERS—(Continued).

For going into Committee.	County.	Against.
Oswald, Alexander	Ayrshire	
Pennett, Hon. Col.	Carnarvon	
Smollett, Alexander	Dumbartonshire	
Stewart, Patrick M.	Renfrewshire	
Traill, George	Caithness-shire	
Seymour, Sir H. B.	Antrim	
Stanley, Hon. W. O.	Anglesey	
Wellesley, Lord C.	South Hampshire	Compton, Henry C.
	North Hampshire	Heathcote, Sir W.
Wood, Col. Thos.	Breconshire	
Wortley, Hon. J. S.	Buteshire	
Wynn, Sir C. W.	Montgomeryshire	
Young, John	Cavan	Maxwell, Hon. J. P.
	North Devonshire	Acland, Sir T.
	ditto	Buck, Lewis W.
	South Devonshire	Buller, Sir J. B. Y.
	ditto	Courtenay, Lord
	Glamorganshire	Adare, Viscount
	Bedfordshire	Alford, Viscount
	ditto	Astell, William
	Cambridgeshire	Allix, John Peter
	ditto	Yorke, Hon. E. T.
	East Surrey	Antrobus, Edmund
	ditto	Kemble, Henry
	West Surrey	Trotter, John
	Kincardineshire	Arbuthnot, Lt-Gen.
	West Kent	Austen, Col. Thos.
	ditto	Filmer, Sir Ed.
	East Kent	Deedes, Wm.
	ditto	Plumptre, John P.
	West Norfolk	Bagge, William
	ditto	Chute, Wm. Lyde W.
	East Norfolk	Burroughes, H. N.
	ditto	Wodehouse, Ed.
	Denbighshire	Bagot, Hon. W.
	ditto	Wynn, Sir W. W.
	Herefordshire	Bailey, Joseph, jun.
	ditto	Baskerville, T. B. M.
	ditto	Hoskins, Kedgwin
	Linlithgowshire	Baillie, William
	Dorsetshire	Bankes, George
	ditto	Floyer, John
	ditto	Seymer, H. K.
	Berkshire	Barrington, Viscount
	ditto	Palmer, Robert
	ditto	Pusey, Philip
	Londonderry	Bateson, Thomas

## COUNTY MEMBERS—(Continued).

For going into Committee.	County.	Against.
	Londonderry	Jones, Capt. T.
	S. Northumberland	Bell, Matthew
	N. Northumberland	Ossulston, Lord
	West Suffolk	Bennett, Phillip, jun.
	ditto	Waddington, Harry S.
	East Suffolk	Gooch, E. L.
	ditto	Rendlesham, Lord
	South Essex	Bramston, Thos. W.
	ditto	Palmer, George
	North Essex	Round, Charles Gray
	ditto	Tyrrell, Sir J. T., Bt.
	Carlow	Bruen, Col.
	ditto	Bunbury, Thomas
	Berwickshire	Campbell, Sir H. P. H.
	Down	Castlereagh, Visct.
	ditto	Hill, Lord A. E.
	North Lincolnshire	Christopher, Rbt. A.
	ditto	Worsley, Lord
	South Lincolnshire	Trollope, Sir J., Bart.
	ditto	Turner, Christopher
	East Gloucestershire	Codrington, Sir C. W.
	ditto	Worcester, Marqs. of
	West Gloucestershire	Hayle, Robt. B.
	South Derbyshire	Colville, Charles R.
	ditto	Mundy, Edward M.
	Donegal	Conolly, Col. E. M.
	ditto	Hayes, Sir E. S., Bt.
	Queen's County	Coote, Sir C. H., Bt.
	ditto	Vesey, Hon. Thomas
	Carmarthenshire	Davies, D. A. S.
	Buckinghamshire	Dupre, C. G.
	ditto	Fitzmaurice, Hon. W.
	ditto	Tower, Christopher
	Pembrokeshire	Emlyn, Viscount
	North Leicestershire	Farnham, Edward B.
	ditto	Manners, Lord C. S.
	South Leicestershire	Halford, Sir H., Bt.
	ditto	Packe, Charles W.
	Huntingdonshire	Fellowes, Edward
	ditto	Thornhill, George
	Rutlandshire	Finch, George
	ditto	Heathcote, G. J.
	Sligo	Ffolliott, John
	ditto	Gore, Wm. R. O.
	Stirlingshire	Forbes, William
	East Sussex	Frewen, C. H.
	ditto	Fuller, Augustus E.

## COUNTY MEMBERS—(Continued).

For going into Committee.	County.	Against.
	West Sussex	March, Earl of
	ditto	Wyndham, Col. C.
	Aberdeenshire	Gordon, Capt. Hon. W.
	Hertfordshire	Halsey, Thomas P.
	ditto	Ryder, Hon. G. D.
	ditto	Smith, Abel
	Dublin County	Hamilton, Jas. H.
	ditto	Taylor, Thomas E.
	Oxfordshire	Harcourt, George G.
	ditto	Henley, Joseph W.
	ditto	Norreys, Lord
	Edinburgh County	Hope, Sir John, Bt.
	N. Nottinghamshire	Houldsworth, Thos.
	S. Nottinghamshire	Rolleston, Col. L.
	West Worcestershire	Knight, F. W.
	ditto	Lygon, Hon. H. B.
	East Worcestershire	Taylor, James A.
	S. Northamptonshire	Knightley, Sir C.
	ditto	Vyse, R. H. Howard
	N. Northamptonshire	Maunsell, T. P.
	ditto	O'Brien, A. Stafford
	Longford	Lefroy, Anthony
	Monaghan	Leslie, C. P.
	ditto	Shirley, E. P.
	Lanarkshire	Lockhart, William
	Westmoreland	Lowther, Lt. Col. H. C.
	ditto	Thompson, Ald. W.
	Ross and Cromarty	Mackenzie, Thomas
	Peebleshire	Mackenzie, W. F.
	Galway	Martin, Thomas B.
	Monmouth	Morgan, C. O. S.
	Cardiganshire	Powell, Col. W. E.
	Merionethshire	Richards, Richard
	Roxburghshire	Scott, Hon. F.
	Radnorshire	Walsh, Sir J. B.
	Fermanagh	Brooke, Sir A. B., Bt.
	Elginshire and Nairn	Bruce, C. Lennox C.

## BOROUGH MEMBERS—ENGLAND.

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Electors.	Against.
Thesiger, Sir F.	Abingdon	323	Repton, Geo. W. J.
	St. Alban's	585	
Etwall, Ralph	Andover	242	
Paget, Lord William	ditto		

## BOROUGH MEMBERS—ENGLAND—(Continued).

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Electors.	Against.
Matheson, James	Ashburton	269	Clayton, Rice Rich.
Hindley, Charles	Ashton-under-Lyne	671	
	Aylesbury	1652	
Tancred, Henry W.	Banbury	386	
Duncan, Viscount	Bath	3119	
Roebuck, John A.	ditto		
Paget, Lieut. Col. F.	Beaumaris	295	
Polhill, Capt. Fredk.	Bedford	878	
Stuart, Henry	ditto		
Hogg, James Weir	Beverley	1063	
Townley, John	ditto		Gardner, John D. Spry, Sir Samuel T.
Winnington, Sir T. E.	Bewdley	429	
Feilden, William	Blackburn	912	
Hornby, John	ditto		
	Bodmin	339	
	ditto		
Ainsworth, Peter	Bolton	1471	
Bowring, Dr.	ditto		
Busfield, William	Bradford, Yorks.	1465	
	Bridgewater	573	Broadwood, Henry
Mitchell, Thomas A.	Bridport	558	
Hervey, Lord Alfred	Brighton	2533	
Pechell, Captain G.R.	ditto		Chandos, Marquis of Hall, Colonel John
	Buckingham	391	
	ditto		
Walker, Richard	Bury	790	
Fitzroy, Lord Charles	Bury St. Edmds	704	
Jermyn, Earl	ditto		
Shelburne, Earl of	Calne	179	
Kelly, Sir Fitzroy	Cambridge	1857	
Sutton, H.T. Manners	ditto		
Pryse, Pryse	Cardigan	863	
Howard, Philip Hy.	Carlisle	953	Boldero, Capt. H.G. Neeld, Joseph Harris, Hon. E.A.J.
Marshall, William	ditto		
Morris, David	Carmarthen	977	
Hughes, W. Bulkeley	Carnarvon	1037	
Byng, Rt. Hon. G. S.	Chatham	877	
Berkeley, Hon. C. F.	Cheltenham	1713	
Grosvenor, Lord R.	Chester	2170	
Jervis, John	ditto		
	Chippenham	265	
	ditto		
	Christchurch	269	
Cripps, William	Cirencester	552	
Villiers, Viscount	ditto		
Cardwell, Edward	Clitheroe	386	

## BOROUGH MEMBERS—ENGLAND—(Continued).

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Electors	Against.
Aglionby, H. A.	Cockermouth	288	
Horsman, Edward	ditto		
	Colchester	1206	Sanderson, Richard
	ditto		Smythe, Sir G. H., Bt.
Ellice, Rt. Hon. Edw.	Coventry	3810	
Williams, William	ditto		
	Cricklade	1646	Howard, Hon. H. T.
	ditto		Neeld, John
Moffat, George	Dartmouth	261	
Mainwaring, T.	Denbigh	941	
Duncannon, Viscount	Derby	1820	
Strutt, Edward	ditto		
	Devizes	375	Bruges, Wm. Heald
	ditto		Heneage, G. H. W.
Grey, Sir George, Bart.	Devonport	2121	
Tufnell, Henry	ditto		
Graham, Sir J., Bart.	Dorchester	398	
Reid, Sir J. Rae, Bt.	Dover	1846	
	Droitwich	357	Packington, J. S.
Benbow, John	Dudley	937	
Bright, John	Durham	1031	
	Eye	332	Kerrison, Sir E., Bt.
Duncombe, Thos. S.	Finsbury	12974	
Wakley, Thomas	ditto		
Bulkeley, Sir R. B., Bt.	Flint	1053	
	Frome	839	Sheppard, Thomas
Hutt, William	Gateshead	650	
Berkeley, Cpt. M. F. F.	Gloucester	1872	
Philpotts, John	ditto		
Barnard, Edw. George	Greenwich	3610	
Dundas, Adm. J. W. D.	ditto		
	Great Grimsby	515	Heneage, Edward
Mangles, Capt. Ross D.	Guildford	495	
Wall, Charles Baring	ditto		
Protheroe, Edw., jun.	Halifax	873	
Wood, Charles	ditto		
	Hastings	958	Brisco, Musgrave
Philips, Sir Rd. B. P.	Haverfordwest	726	
	Helston	406	Vyryan, Sir R. R., Bt.
Price, Sir Robert, Bt.	Hereford	1123	
Puleford, Robert	ditto		
Cowper, Hon. W. F.	Hertford	614	
Mahon, Viscount	ditto		
Ballhe, Col. H. D.	Honiton	447	
McGenchy, Forster A.	ditto		
	Horsham	366	Hurst, Robert H.
Stansfield, W. B. C.	Huddersfield	865	

BOROUGH MEMBERS—ENGLAND—(*Continued*).

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Elec- tors.	Against.
Majoribanks, Stewart	Hythe	509	Fox, Sackville Lane Gladstone, Capt. J. M.
	Ipswich	1690	
	ditto		
Praed, W. Tyringham	St. Ives	598	Ferrand, W. Busfeild Lawson, Andrew
Warburton, Henry	Kendal	351	
Godson, Richard	Kidderminster	469	
Hanmer, Sir J., Bart.	Kingston-upon- Hull	4767	Ferrand, W. Busfeild Lawson, Andrew
	Knaresborough	240	
	ditto		
D'Eyncourt, Rt. Hn. C.	Lambeth	6547	Collett, W. Rickford Sibthorp, Col. C.
Hawes, Ben., jun.	ditto		
Bowles, Admiral	Launceston	393	
Aldam, Wm., jun.	Leeds	6182	Hussey, Thomas
Beckett, William	ditto		
Easthorpe, Sir J., Bt.	Leicester	3687	
Ellis, Wynn	ditto		Hussey, Thomas
Elphinstone, H.	Lewes	900	
Fitzroy, Hon. Henry	ditto		
Mostyn, Hon. E. M. L.	Lichfield	876	Hussey, Thomas
Paget, Lord A. H.	ditto		
	Lincoln	1041	
	ditto		Hussey, Thomas
Buller, Charles	Liskeard	285	
Lyall, George	London	19064	
Masterman, John	ditto		Hussey, Thomas
Pattison, James	ditto		
Russell, Lord John	ditto		
	Lyme Regis	277	Hussey, Thomas
Mackinnon, W. A.	Lymington	305	
Stewart, John	ditto		
Brocklehurst, John	Macclesfield	908	Dodd, George Hope, A. J. B. Dick, Quintin Round, John
Grimsditch, Thomas	ditto		
	Maidstone	1687	
	ditto		Dodd, George Hope, A. J. B. Dick, Quintin Round, John
	Maldon	844	
	ditto		
Howard, Hon. J. K.	Malmesbury	280	Dodd, George Hope, A. J. B. Dick, Quintin Round, John
Childers, John W.	Malton	558	
Denison, John E.	ditto		
Gibson, Thomas M.	Manchester	12150	Dodd, George Hope, A. J. B. Dick, Quintin Round, John
Philips, Mark	ditto		
Baring, Major H. B.	Marlborough	291	
Bruce, Lord Ernest	ditto		Dodd, George Hope, A. J. B. Dick, Quintin Round, John
Hall, Sir Benj., Bart.	Marylebone	11625	
Napier, Sir C.	ditto		
Guest, Sir J. John	Merthyr Tidvill	760	

## BOROUGH MEMBERS—ENGLAND—(Continued).

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Electors.	Against.
	Midhurst	261	Walpole, Spencer H.
Blewitt, Reginald J.	Monmouth	1304	
	Montgomery, &c	1021	Cholmondeley, Hn. H.
Howard, Cap. Hn. E. G.	Morpeth	363	
	Newark	1130	Manners, Lord J.
	ditto		Stuart, John
Hamilton, W. J.	Newport, Isle of		
Martin, Charles W.	Wight	669	
Wrightson, W. B.	Northallerton	281	
Currie, Rames	Northampton	2057	
Smith, Rt. lo. R. V.	ditto		
Douro, Marquis of	Norwich	4334	
Smith, Benjamin	ditto		
Gisborne, T., jun.	Nottingham	5436	
Hobhouse, Sir J. C.	ditto		
Fielden, John	Oldham	1402	
Owen, Sir John	Pembroke	1179	
Plumridge, Cp. I. H.	Penryn and		
Vivian, Capt. J. C.	Falmouth	885	
Fitzwilliam, Hn. G. W.	Peterborough	569	
Heron, Sir Robert	ditto		
	Petersfield	343	Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.
Ebrington, Viscount	Plymouth	1907	
Gill, Thomas	ditto		
Philips, George R.	Poole	543	
Baring, F. Thornhill	Portsmouth	1837	
Staunton, Sir G. T.	ditto		
Fleetwood, Sir H., Bt.	Preston	3633	
Strickland, Sir G., Bt.	ditto		
	Radnor	500	Price, Richard
	Reading	1140	Chelsea, Viscount
	ditto		Russell, Charles
Eastnor, Viscount	Reigate	198	
Colborne, H. W. N. R.	Richmond	289	
Dundas, Hon. J. C.	ditto		
Cockburn, Sir G., Bt.	Ripon	383	
Crawford, Sharman	Rochdale	965	
Curtis, Herbert B.	Rye	524	
Brotherton, Joseph	Salford	2519	
Troubridge, Sir E. T.	Sandwich	977	
Johnstone, Sir J. V. B.	Scarborough	559	
Trench, Mj.-Gen. Sir F.	ditto		
	Shaftesbury	491	Sheridan, R. Brinsley
Parker, John	Sheffield	4451	
Ward, Henry George	ditto		
	New Shoreham	1988	Goring, Charles
Hope, George Wm.	Southampton	1463	

BOROUGH MEMBERS—ENGLAND—(*Continued*).

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Electors.	Against.
Wawn, John Twizell	South Shields	686	
Humphrey, Ald. J.	Southwark	5047	
Molesworth, Sir W.	ditto		
Buller, Edward	Stafford	1265	
Carnegie, Hon. S. T.	ditto		
Cobden, Richard	Stockport	1279	
Marsland, Henry	ditto		
Copeland, Alderman	Stoke-on-Trent	1623	
Scrope, G. Poulett	Stroud	1202	
Stanton, Wm. Henry	ditto		
Vivian, John Henry	Swansea	1247	
A'Court, Capt. E. H.	Tamworth	501	
Peel, Sir R., Bart.	ditto		
Colebrooke, Sir T. E.	Taunton	1010	
Labouchere, Rt. Hon.	ditto		
Russell, Lord Ed.	Tavistock	347	
Trelawney, John S.	ditto		
Martin, John	Pewkesbury	409	
Baring, Rt. Hon. W. B.	Thetford	160	
Flower, Sir J., Bart.	ditto		
	Thirsk	327	Bell, John
Heathcoat, John	Tiverton	496	
Palmerston, Viscount	ditto		
Baldwin, Charles B.	Totnes	341	
Seymour, Lord	ditto		
Clay, Sir Wm., Bart.	Tower Hamlets	13551	
Fox, Col. C. R.	ditto		
Metcalfe, Henry	Tynemouth	764	
Lascelles, Hn. W. S.	Wakefield	809	
	Wallingford	368	Blackstone, W. S.
Scott, Robert	Walsall	837	
	Wareham	428	Drax, J. S.
	Warrington	633	Blackburne, Jno. I.
Collins, William	Warwick	977	
Douglas, Sir C. E.	ditto		
Hayter, Wm. G.	Wells	414	
	Wenlock	949	Forester, Hn. GCW
	ditto		Gaskell, Jas. Milnes
	Westbury	291	Lopes, Sir Ralph, Bt.
Evans, Gn. Sir D. Lacy	Westminster	14254	
Leader, John Temple	ditto		
Bernal, Ralph	Weymouth	660	
Christie, Wm. D.	ditto		
	Whitby	445	Chapman, Aaron
	Whitehaven	508	Attwood, Matthias
	Isle of Wight	1167	Holmes, Hon. W. H.
Somerton, Viscount	Wilton	205	

## BOROUGH MEMBERS—ENGLAND—(Continued).

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Electors.	Against.
Neville, Ralph	Windsor	667	Churchill, Lord A. S.
Reid, Col. Geo. Alex.	ditto		
Thornley, Thomas	Wolverhampton	2643	
Villiers, Hon C. P.	ditto		
	Woodstock	369	
Dashwood, Geo. H.	Wycombe	399	
Rumbold, Chas. Edw.	Yarmouth	1904	
Wilshire, William	ditto		

## IRELAND.

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Electors.	Against.
Rawdon, Lt. Col. J. D.	Armagh	892	Hamilton, G. A Shaw, Right Hon. F.
Collett, John	Athlone	342	
Chichester, Lord J. L.	Belfast	4234	
Ross, David Robert	Ditto		
Layard, Capt. B. V.	Carlow	417	
Kirk, Peter	Carrickfergus	1326	
O'Brien, Timothy	Cashel	267	
Pigot, Hon. David R.	Clonmel	687	
Boyd, John, Dr.	Coleraine	368	
M'Carthy, A.	Cork	4364	
Somerville, Sir W. M.	Drogheda	506	Cole, Hon. H. Arthur
	Dublin University	1727	
Redington, Thos. N.	Dundalk	538	
Northland, Viscount	Dungannon	196	
Bridgeman, Hewitt	Ennis	230	
	Enniskillen	179	
Blake, Martin Joseph	Galway	1600	
O'Connell, John	Kilkenny	580	
Meynell, Capt. Henry	Lisburn	203	
Ferguson, Sir A., Bt.	Londonderry	906	
Norreys, Sir D. J., Bt.	Mallow	336	
Gore, Hon. Robert	New Ross	277	
Damer, Rt. Hon. G. L. D.	Portarlington	188	
Somers, John P.	Sligo	821	
O'Connell, Maurice	Tralee	258	
Barron, Sir H. W., Bt.	Waterford	1499	
Wyse, Thomas	ditto		
Esmonde, Sir Thos.	Wexford	405	
Cavendish, Hon. C. C.	Youghall	498	

## SCOTLAND.

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Electors.	Against.
Bannerman, Alex.	Aberdeen	2189	Balfour, J. Maitland, jun.
Ellice, Edward, jun.	St. Andrews	835	
Stuart, Lord P. J. H. C.	Ayr, &c., &c.	1897	
Ewart, William	Dumfries	977	
Duncan, George	Dundee	2739	
Craig, Wm. G., jun.	Edinburgh	5346	
Macaulay, Rt. Hn. TB	ditto		
Hay, Sir Andrew L.	Elgin, &c.	612	
Baird, William	Falkirk	1369	
Dennistoun, John	Glasgow	8241	
Oswald, James	ditto		
Baine, Walter	Greenock	1113	
	Haddington	650	
Morison, James	Inverness	757	
Bouverie, Hon. E. P.	Kilmarnock	1262	
Ferguson, Lt. Col. R.	Kirkaldy	657	
Hume, Joseph	Montrose, &c.	1403	
Hastie, Archibald	Paisley	1324	
Maule, Rt. Hon. Fox	Perth	1082	
Dalmeny, Lord	Stirling, &c.	1141	
Loch, James	Wick, &c.	742	
M'Taggart, Sir John	Wigton, &c.	393	

## BOROUGH MEMBERS WHO DIVIDE THE REPRESENTATION.

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Electors.	Against.
Gore, Montague	Barnstaple	811	Hodgson, Frederick
Forster, Matthew	Berwick	755	Hodgson, Richard
Muntz, Geo. Fred.	Birmingham	4619	Spooner, Richard
Duke, Ald. Sir J.	Boston	1086	Brownrigg, J. S.
Whitmore, Thos. C.	Bridgenorth	778	Pigott, Sir R., Bart.
Berkeley, Hon F. H. F.	Bristol	10878	Miles, Philip W. S.
Goulburn, Hon. H.	Cambridge University		Law, Hon. C. E.
Smythe, Hon. G. A.	Canterbury	1774	Bradshaw, James
Smith, John Abel	Chichester	829	Lennox, Lord H.
Gregory Wm. Henry	Dublin	12290	Grogan, Edward
Hill, Lord A. M. C.	Evesham	370	Borthwick, Peter
Divett, Edward	Exeter	3669	Duckworth, Sir ITB
Tollemache, Hon. F. J.	Grantham	691	Welby Glynne Earle
Attwood, John	Harwich	181	Beresford, Major W.
Peel, Col. Jonathan	Huntingdon	386	Baring, Thomas

**BOROUGH MEMBERS WHO DIVIDE THE REPRESENTATION—**  
(Continued).

For going into Committee.	Borough.	No. of Electors.	Against.
Jocelyn, Viscount	King's Lynn	1144	Bentinck, Lord G.
Green, Thomas	Lancaster	1311	Marton, George
Barkly, Henry	Leominster	624	Arkwright, Geo.
Sandon, Lord	Liverpool	14970	Douglas, Sir H.
Botfield, Beriah	Ludlow	422	Ackers, James
Buckley, E.	Newcastle-under-Lyne	1031	Colquhoun, J. C.
Ord, William	Newcastle-on-Tyne	4530	Hinde, J. Hodgson
Langton, Jas. H.	Oxford	2773	Maclean, Donald
Estcourt, T. G. B.	Oxford University		Inglis, Sir R. H., Bt.
Milnes, R. Monckton	Pontefract	722	Pollington, Viscount
Vernon, Granville H.	East Retford	2785	Duncombe, Cp. H. A.
Bodkin, Wm. Henry	Rochester	1124	Douglas, J. D. S.
Tomline, George	Shrewsbury	1865	Disraeli, Benj.
Clerk, Sir G. Bart.	Stamford	679	Granby, Marq. of
Barclay, Edmund	Sunderland	1657	Hudson, George
Turner, David	Truro	644	Vivian, John Ennis
Escott, Bickham	Winchester	618	East, James Buller
Wilde, Sir Thomas	Worcester	256	Bailey, Joseph
Yorke, H. R.	York	3326	Lowther, Sir J. H.

**CONSERVATIVE ABSENTEES—15.**

Ashley Cooper, Hon. A. H., Dorchester	*Hardy, J., Bradford
Blakemore, R., Well, Somerset	Hussey, A., Salisbury
*Burrell, Sir C., New Shoreham	James, Sir W., Hull
Dowdeswell, W., Tewkesbury	Kerr, D. S., Downpatrick
Foreman, T. S., Bridgewater	*Lascelles, Hon. E., Ripon
Hamilton, Capt. C. B., Aylesbury	Mildmay, St. J., Southampton
Hampden, R., Great Marlow	Morgan, M. R., Brecon
	*Somerset, Ld. G., Monmouthsh.

Those marked (\*) are stated to be ill.

**LIBERAL ABSENTEES—30.**

Archbold, R., Kildare County	Grattan, H., Meath County
Armstrong, Sir A., King's County	Hallyburton, F. G., Forfarshire
Arundel, Earl of, Arundel	*Johnson, Gen. W. A., Oldham
Bellew, R. M., Louth	Kelly, J., Limerick City
Berkeley, G. W., Gloucestershire	Maher, N., Tipperary County
Bodkin, J. J., Galway County	O'Brien, J., Limerick City
Callaghan, D., Cork	O'Brien, W. J., Limerick County
Duff, J., Banffshire	O'Brien, C., Clare County
French, F., Roscommon County	Ogle, S. C. H. S., Northumberland
Granger, T., Durham City	Osborne, R. B., Wycombe

Powell, C., Limerick County	Tuite, H. M., Westmeath County
Ricardo, J. L., Stockton-on-Tees	Watson, W. H., Kinsale
Roche, E. B., Cork County	Wemyss, Capt., Fifeshire
Sheil, R. L., Dungarvon (abroad)	Westhenra, Hn-Cl., King's County
Talbot, C. R. G., Glanmorgansh.	White, H., Longford County

## PAIRS.

Newry, Lord, Newry	Wyndham, J. H. C.
Blake, Sir V., Bart., Galway	Nicholl, D., Cardiff, &c.
Denison, W. J., West Surrey	Trevor, R., Carmarthenshire
Dundas, F., Orkney and Zetland	Hepburn, Sir T., Haddingtonshire
Holland, R., Hastings	Lindsay, H., Sandwich
Listowel, Lord, St. Albans	Eaton, Capt., Cambridgeshire
Maitland, T., Kirkcudbrightshire	Barneby, J. E., Worcestershire
Ponsonby, C., Poole	Archdall, Capt., Fermanagh
Rice, E. R., Dover	County
Rutherford, Rt. Hon. A., Leith	Williams, T. P., Great Marlow
Standish, C. Wigan	Cresswell, A. B., Northumberland
Stuart, W. V., Waterford County	Bernard, Lord, Bandonbridge
Alexander, N., Antrim County	

## HOUSE OF COMMONS, MARCH 2.

## MONDAY.

On the motion of **SIR R. PEEL**, the Order of the day was then read for going into Committee upon Customs and Corn Importation.

The House having accordingly resolved itself into Committee,

The **CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER** was understood to move the following resolution:—"That in lieu of the duties now payable on the importation of corn, grain, meal, or flour, there shall be paid, until the 1st day of February, 1849, the following duties," &c.

**MR. C. VILLIERS** then rose to move the Amendment of which he had given notice, that all duty for the purpose of Protection should immediately cease. The Hon. Gentleman assured the House that he would not detain them longer than was necessary for him to state the reasons why he asked their support to the Amendment of which he had given notice. Nothing could be further from his object than to impede the progress of this measure, and he had intended to have proposed a distinct motion at a later period of the session, with the view of carrying out the object of his amendment, but, certain statements that had been made by some parties during the last debate had deterred him from taking that course; and, therefore, he availed himself of the passage of this measure through the House to propose that amendment now (hear, hear). The ministerial measure recognised the expediency of establishing the freedom of trade in this country, he regretted that it had been considered advisable to postpone the establishment of it till the year 1849. In his opinion that delay was uncalled for; and the full benefit of the ministerial scheme might be obtained at once. He should therefore propose an amend-

ment, providing for the Total and Immediate Repeal of all the existing Duties on Corn. He showed that it was the opinion of the late Earl Spencer, and of those great living agriculturists, the Earl of Radnor and Lord Ducie, that it was for the interest of the farmer—and, indeed, of agriculture generally—that the abolition of the Corn Laws should not be gradual, but immediate. He then adverted, but not in a spirit of hostility, to the position in which the Government stood with regard to his amendment. He could not understand what objections Sir R. Peel could urge against it. If no evil or difficulty were to be apprehended from acceding to his proposition, he asked the Committee to consider whether there were not some advantages to be derived from it? For instance, it would enable the Government to meet with greater ease the emergency of Ireland, and it would lead to the dissolution of the Anti-Corn Law League, which, though it was entitled to the gratitude of the country, would cease its agitation as soon as the cause of it disappeared.

COLONEL SIBTHORP inveighed against the Ministers who had insulted the country by their extravagant proposition for the Repeal of the Corn Laws. He contrasted with Sir R. Peel's speeches of the present session, his speeches in 1835, and more especially his great speech at a dinner given to him by the United Conservative party, in May, 1838. He also commented upon the inconsistencies of Sir J. Graham who, in his opinion, was capable of adding shapes to those of Proteus, and colours to those of theameleon. If there should be a division on this question, he should divide along with Sir R. Peel, but from no affection to him, and from no regard to the Members of his Cabinet. He should divide in that way because, on comparing the propositions of Mr. Villiers and Sir R. Peel, he believed that Sir R. Peel's proposition was the less evil of the two.

LORD WORSLEY observed, that if he were called upon to make a choice between the amendment of Mr. Villiers and the proposition of Sir R. Peel, he should certainly vote for the amendment of Mr. Villiers in preference. But if he gave such a vote at present, he should be precluded from voting in favour of any other amendment which might be proposed on the ministerial plan—for instance, he should not be able to give his support to the amendment of Mr. O. Stanley for a fixed duty of 5s., which he conceived would be an adjustment of the question.

MR. M. GIBSON considered that Mr. Villiers had taken a most judicious course in proposing his amendment to the House. He could not see any danger in pressing it to a division, for it suggested the only rational method of meeting the emergencies of Ireland. Besides, it would rescue the farmers from the uncertainty in which the present scheme would involve them. They would even be happier in knowing the worst than they were now when they had the hopes of a respite. Protection had been indicted of high crimes and misdemeanours—it had been tried and found guilty. The country was calling for immediate execution; and the party opposite was demanding, but, he trusted, in vain for a respite.

MR. B. ESCOTT considered the amendment of Mr. Villiers the most consistent with reason; but could not vote for it on the present occasion, as he was afraid that he should endanger the success of the ministerial proposal by so doing.

**MR. R. COLBORNE** declared his intention of voting for the amendment of **Mr. Villiers**, because the Parliament must be dissolved before the expiration of three years; and in that case the agitation on this subject must be renewed, if the Government scheme were adopted.

After a few words from **MR. GORING**, declaring his intention to oppose this measure to the utmost of his abilities,

**MR. BRIGHT** commented on the speech of Lord Worsley, and on his declaration that a fixed duty of 5s. would now settle this question. He read extracts from a speech of Lord Worsley to show that at no very distant period his Lordship had declared that such a measure would not prove an adjustment of it. He warned the Government that agitation would be continued on this subject so long as there was one shred of protection to be found in the laws regulating the import of provisions.

**SIR R. PEEL** would not renew the debate on the Corn Laws, which had already extended over twelve nights, although he was anxious to make some explanations on some matters which had occurred in it. He would, however, postpone these explanations till the second reading of the bill to be introduced upon these resolutions, and would confine himself to the consideration of the question whether it be desirable that the Corn Law should be totally and immediately repealed, or that they should be modified and continued for three years longer. If he looked singly to the emergency in Ireland, he would not deny that the immediate suspension of the Corn Laws was the more expedient measure of the two. He knew that the Anti-Corn Law League would be satisfied with nothing else than a total and immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws; but there were many persons who thought that the Corn Laws ought not to be repealed at all. His object in bringing forward this project was two-fold—one was to meet the emergency in Ireland, and another was to reconcile the Legislature to an adjustment of the question. He then entered into some details to show the reduction which his resolution would produce in the duties now paid upon the importation of grain into Ireland. Having gone through those details, he repeated his former declaration, that if the representatives of the agricultural interest should prefer an immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws to the continuance of them for three years, and should combine with **Mr. Villiers** to carry his amendment, he should accept the amended proposal, and exert himself to the utmost to carry it into law. At the same time he would not answer for the result in another place. Of this he was certain, that had he brought forward a motion for the immediate Repeal of the Corn Law, he should have abandoned all hope of succeeding with it. He was sorry to hear **Mr. Bright** threatening them with continued agitation on this subject. He thought that such agitation would be an evil, and, moreover, he thought that it would be unsuccessful.

After a few observations from **MR. G. PALMER** against the Government measure, which the noise in the House rendered almost inaudible,

**LORD J. RUSSELL** took a view of the various propositions which were then before the Committee. There was one for imports, a

fixed duty of 5s. on foreign corn. He did not believe that that proposition would raise the price of corn 5s. a quarter—on the contrary, he agreed with Mr. Senior, and others, that it would not raise it more than 1s. a quarter—but at the present time he could not vote for a proposition which would not be a final adjustment of the Corn Laws, and which would keep the farmer in a prolonged state of agitation. He had no occasion to notice another proposition which would prolong the continuance of the corn duties for two years more than the proposition then before the House, further than to say that it was liable to the same objection of prolonging agitation as that for a fixed duty. He therefore came to the consideration of the present amendment, which proposed that the Corn Laws be forthwith repealed. Comparing that proposition with the Government scheme, he considered it to be more wise as an abstract, and more beneficial as a practical measure. The case, however, which he had then to consider was, that of Government proposing a plan for the settlement of a question on which there was great resistance offered by a party in the House of Commons, and on which there might be a still greater resistance offered on the part of a majority in the House of Lords. He did not know what view the Upper House might take of that question, and, therefore, he felt compelled to listen to the views taken by the Prime Minister. Sir R. Peel said he had reasons why he preferred his own proposition. He (Lord J. Russell) did not think those reasons sufficient; but he was obliged to consider that although, on the one hand, he should gain a better measure, he should, on the other, risk the success of a beneficial one. On weighing these two considerations, he could not bring himself to assist in carrying out the amendment of Mr. Villiers. He wished most ardently to see this question settled; and the way in which he should act would be that which he deemed most conducive to that great end; namely, that of voting against every proposition which had not the sanction and support of Government. Sir R. Peel had said, that if he had proposed a total and immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws, he knew that he should have failed. And yet Sir R. Peel regretted that he (Lord J. Russell) had not brought in such a measure. He thought that Sir R. Peel must be now satisfied that those of his party who would have joined him in supporting such a measure when introduced by a Whig Minister, would have been a very small number indeed—probably forty or fifty at most, and perhaps not more than twenty. Under such a circumstance it would have been quite impossible for him to have got his proposition even so far as a Committee.

SIR H. JOLLIFFE hoped that this measure would be defeated; but if we were to have a great change in the Corn Laws, was not this the time when that change could be made most favourably?

MR. HUME, in the hope that there would be no disunion in the Liberal ranks, declared his determination not to vote for the proposition of Mr. Villiers, but for that of the Government.

After a few words from the MARQUIS OF GRANBY, a confused discussion arose, in the midst of which some Hon. Member moved the adjournment of the debate.

On this question the Committee divided, when there appeared :—

Ayes	...	...	...	...	...	70
Noes	...	...	.	...	...	227

Majority against the adjournment	...	...	157
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LORD JOHN MANNERS proposed a similar amendment, on which an angry discussion, full of personalities arose, in which Lord J. Russell, Mr. Ferrand, Lord C. Hamilton, and several other Members took a part. It was at last, terminated by Lord John Russell observing that, in the then temper of the Committee the best thing that could be done was to move that the Chairman report progress, and ask leave to sit again to-morrow. This proposition was acceded to. The House resumed and immediately afterwards adjourned.

### TUESDAY, MARCH 3.

In the House of Commons several hours were occupied partly in a discussion originated by MR. NEWDEGATE, upon the evils of the Registration system, the misdeeds of the Anti-Corn Law League in procuring frivolous objections to their qualifications to be served upon county electors, and counter-charges of the same character against the agriculturists; but partly also in the interchange of all sorts of personalities connected with the exciting subject under discussion. It would be utterly impossible to give an intelligible summary of all the charges made and refuted, or counter-charged upon the original complainants, and we are compelled, therefore, to refer our readers to the Parliamentary Reports, with this explanation only, that although Mr. Newdegate's motion, which had given rise to the whole discussion was ultimately withdrawn, a pretty general opinion was expressed on all sides, that some change in the present system of registration is absolutely necessary to protect the duly qualified elector from vexatious objections against his right to the franchise.

LORD J. RUSSELL had always been of opinion that the tendering of objections to a great extent was an abuse; and he had in consequence, some years ago, proposed a bill by which electors, after having had their votes twice objected to without success, could not be objected to again unless they had either sold or otherwise diminished the value of their freeholds. It made no difference whether the Anti-Corn Law League had or had not been guilty of this abuse, supposing you allowed its continuance by the Protective Society. The House ought to apply a legislative remedy to this abuse, which did, in fact, disfranchise all the independent voters of the country. Mr. S. Wortley had spoken of the creation of votes. As a Member for a Scotch county, Mr. Wortley must know that nowhere had that abuse been carried to a greater extent than in Scotland. It was an abuse which required immediate correction.

MR. HUMF felt great satisfaction that this abuse had arrived at its present crisis, because there was now some hope of its correction. The best mode of amending the Registration Act would be by simplifying the franchise. There were now fifty different sorts of franchise; he would reduce them all to nearly one—he meant to household suffrage.

After a short conversation, in which Mr. Aglionby and Lord Ebrington, and some other members took part,

MR. NEWDEGATE, in compliance with the suggestions of his friends, consented to withdraw his motion for the present.

The House then resolved itself into a Committee of the whole House on the Customs' and Corn Importation Acts.

MR. G. BANKES renewed his opposition to the measure of the Government, and made several comments on the speech recently delivered by Sir R. Peel. He again asked why Sir R. Peel, and still more why Lord J. Russell, who had framed the constituencies himself, was so afraid of appealing to the people on this question. He hoped that, if this project should be sanctioned by the House of Commons, it would not be sanctioned by the House of Lords until their Lordships had an opportunity of seeing whether it would be adopted by the will of the people. He confessed that he preferred the scheme of Government to that of Mr. Villiers, and for this reason, that the House would have to go to its constituents before the Government law expired. The new law of settlement was the only part of the miscalled scheme of compensation to which he attached the slightest value.

MR. C. HOWARD regretted that Sir R. Peel had not consented to the immediate repeal of the Corn Laws; yet, though he considered Mr. Villiers' amendment the best abstract proposition, he would vote for Sir R. Peel's original proposition, rather than endanger a measure which would practically prove so beneficial.

SIR T. HAMMER deprecated the continued protraction of this exhausted debate. He expressed his intention of supporting the measure of Government rather than the amendment of Mr. Villiers. If he looked at that amendment merely as an abstract question, every opinion, which he had ever entertained, would induce him to support it; but he knew that Ministers had to consider their general prospects of success in bringing forward any measure on this subject, and rather than cloud them, he would vote for their scheme, although it was not so comprehensive as that of Mr. Villiers.

MR. MOFFATT pointed out the extraordinary turn which the debate had taken. Every speaker agreed with Mr. Villiers; but almost all of them were determined to vote against his proposition. He should allow his vote to keep company with his speech, and should not follow the example of those who voted one way and spoke another. He was sorry that the Gentlemen opposite had determined to defeat this measure, if they could, by delay. He wished that they would consider how they were damaging by such a course all the great interests of the country, and how they were paralyzing the operations of the corn market in Mark-lane, where the contract book was one large blank, although a capital of £5,000,000 was usually employed in that trade.

MR. FINCH preferred the proposition of the Government to that of Mr. Villiers; not that he approved of either, but that he thought it the least evil of the two. He protested, amid roars of laughter, against the inexplicable rapidity with which Ministers were hurrying this measure through the Committee. He thought, that before Hon. Members assented to it, they ought to ascertain what reception it would meet with in Canada and our other colonies. He also

thought that they ought to be acquainted with the financial statement for the year, inasmuch as this proposition repealed a great number of important duties. Indeed, whilst the question of peace and war between England and the United States of America was yet undetermined, it was perfect madness to acquiesce in the extravagant propositions of her Majesty's Government.

MR. WARD had never given a vote with greater difficulty than he did at present; for he concurred in every sentiment contained in the statesman-like speech of Lord J. Russell the other night. He had, however, come to the conclusion that he should not risk the success of the Government scheme by voting in favour of Mr. Villiers' amendment. If hereafter he should find that he did risk its success, he would retract his present vote, and give his cordial support to the measure proposed by Sir R. Peel.

MR. LIDDELL said that there was no force in either of the two grounds upon which their co-operation with the amendment of Mr. Villiers had been asked. He should, therefore, give his support on this occasion to the Government measure, which he must, however, oppose in every other stage of it.

After a few words from Mr. Hutt, Mr. Borthwick declared his intention of voting in favour of the Government proposition, not because he approved it as contrasted with the present law, but because he believed that the amendment of Mr. Villiers would be dangerous to all the interests of the country.

MR. HUME observed, that as during the agitation of the Reform Bill, he had been one of those who had raised the cry of "The bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill," so now he would take the Government measure and nothing but the Government measure.

LORD G. BENTINCK maintained, that on the question whether he ought to consent to the immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws or to accept the proposition of Government, the sentiments of Mr. Miles and his friends had been greatly misapprehended. Mr. Miles had never said that we should prefer immediate repeal to having it suspended over our heads for three years. He had said, that if it was certain that the blow would be struck, it would be better to have it struck at once than suspended for three years. But it was not certain that the blow would be struck. The friends of Protection had received a check and met a repulse; but they were not half beaten yet. Napoleon had said that Englishmen never knew when they were beaten. That was the case of the Protectionists now; they were determined to fight the battle from pillar to post, and from post to pillar, and to keep the conflict up before the country, until it was thoroughly convinced that the Ministerial party had betrayed the trust which its friends had reposed in it. Before the contest was closed, they would drive the Ministers to appeal to the country, and when that appeal was made, he should no longer despair of the success of the country party.

MR. COBDEN called attention to the fact, that very little had been said in the course of this debate on the question before the House, which was, "Shall the Corn Law be abolished immediately or at the close of three years?" He thought that it was unfortunate that the proposition of Mr. Villiers was now brought forward; but according

to the forms of the House it must be brought forward now or never. He was sure that if it could be proposed at a later stage of the Government bill it would meet with greater success than it was likely to meet at present: for Mr. Miles in that House, and the Duke of Richmond in the House of Lords, had both said that they preferred immediate to delayed repeal, and he believed that their opinions were very generally shared by the tenant-farmers. Commenting on Lord G. Bentinck's declaration that his party was not yet half beaten, and that it would go on fighting from pillar to post against the Repeal of the Corn Laws, he said that, if the Noble Lord were determined to continue this battle for three years longer, it was a sufficient reason to induce the Government to settle this question at once and for ever. He called upon the friends of Free Trade to stand by their principles, which were embodied in the present amendment; for if they did they could not be wrong if they should be compelled to go to their constituents. Sir R. Peel had allayed the agitation of the country by the mere introduction of the measure; but he warned the hundred gentlemen who were prepared to give it a desperate resistance, and if they cared to place Ministers in a minority, that that agitation was only lulled by the expectation that the measure would be passed. He could foresee the possibility of Government being driven from office before the measure was passed by the House of Lords. He did not know whether their tenure of office was worth more than two months' purchase. He doubted the wisdom of the Protectionists in upsetting the Government, even for their own selfish policy; but he knew that their success would be a great misfortune to the cause of Free Trade. It was because he foresaw danger to that cause and a fictitious opposition to the Government, to which he would not lend himself a single moment, that he was anxious to keep his principles intact for the country, on which he should be prepared to fall back with greater strength in case the threatened appeal were made to the constituencies. After the decision on the present amendment, he should feel it his duty to give the proposal of Government as cordial a support as any man in that House. Though not a payment in full to the country, it was an instalment of 17s. 6d. in the pound; and he would use the resources which he should gain by it, to gain the remaining 2s. 6d. at the earliest opportunity.

SIR T. ACLAND made an impassioned reply to the speech of Mr. Cobden, and declared his intention of supporting the Government proposition on this occasion, because he considered it an alleviation of the otherwise rapid descent which the agriculturists would have to undergo.

MR. T. DUNCOMBE repeated the declaration which he had made on a former night of his intention to support the Government proposition against that of Mr. Villiers. He had told the Government that if they would stand by their new law of settlement, he would stand by their plan of settling the Corn Laws; and unpopular as the determination might render him, by that determination he would stand. The Protection party, who had heaped such unmeasured invectives upon Sir R. Peel, would that night go with him into the same lobby; but he was almost of opinion that Sir R. Peel would not be safe in their company.

**THE EARL OF MARCH** denied that the Duke of Richmond had ever expressed himself in favour of the total and immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws. The sense of the country was in favour of Protection, and had been strongly declared at all the recent elections, and particularly at Westminster.

**MR. HUDSON**, though opposed to the change proposed by the Government, declared his intention to vote in favour of their resolution, and against that of Mr. Villiers.

**LORD WORSLEY** said a few words which were almost inaudible, but the inference from what we heard was, that in his opinion, the tenant-farmers preferred immediate to suspended repeal.

**COLONEL SIBTHORP** denied that statement, and inveighed bitterly against the treachery of Ministers towards their former supporters.

**MR. WAKLEY** regretted that Mr. Villiers was determined to persist in dividing the Committee upon his amendment, for he was convinced that a more inexpedient course could not be taken. Referring to the speech of Mr. Ferrand, on a former evening, he observed that most of the facts quoted by that gentleman, to prove the existence of great suffering and distress in the manufacturing districts, were arguments in favour, and not in opposition to the Government measure. Did Free Trade exist, or was Protection the law of the land during the time of that lamentable destitution? Did not even the poor creatures, who migrated from the agricultural to the manufacturing districts, after they were sent back to the places from which they originally migrated, return to the manufacturing districts in consequence of finding the distress which they experienced in the protected agricultural parishes more intense than that to which they were exposed in the manufacturing counties? He should give his support to the Government proposition.

**MR. NEWDEGATE** said, that though, in their exasperation at having been betrayed by their natural leaders, some of the tenant-farmers might have expressed themselves in favour of an immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws, he was convinced that a very large majority of them were of opinion that such a measure would not be for their interests.

**MR. VILLIERS** vindicated himself from the censures cast upon him for persisting in this amendment, and expressed his surprise at the reasons urged by Lord G. Bentinck and his party for not giving him their support on this occasion.

The Committee then divided, when there appeared:—

For the amendment	...	...	...	...	78
Against it	...	...	...	...	265
Majority against it	...	...	...	...	187

The Chairman was then directed to report progress. The House resumed, and immediately afterwards adjourned.

THE DIVISION ON MR. VILLIERS'S MOTION FOR THE  
IMMEDIATE REPEAL OF THE CORN LAWS, MARCH 3.

FOR, 78 ; AGAINST, 265.

MAJORITY.

Acland, Sir T. D.	Brooke, Sir A. B.	Duckworth, Sir J.T.B.
Acland, T. D.	Brown, Hon. W.	Duke, Sir J.
A'Court, Captain	Bruce, Lord E.	Duncombe, T.
Acton, Colonel	Bruce, C. L. C.	Duncombe, Hon. A.
Adderley, C. B.	Buck, L. W.	Du Pre, C. G.
Aglionby, H. A.	Buller, C.	Egerton, Sir P.
Alford, Viscount	Buller, Sir J. Y.	Egerton, Lord F.
Allix, J. P.	Butler, P. S.	Ellice, Right Hon. E.
Antrobus, E.	Campbell, Sir H.	Emlyn, Viscount
Arbuthnot, Hon. H.	Cardwell, E.	Entwisle, W.
Archbold, R.	Carnegie, Hon. Capt.	Feilden, W.
Astell, W.	Cavendish, Hon. G.H.	Ferguson, Sir R. A.
Austen, Colonel	Cayley, E. S.	Ferrand, W. B.
Bagge, W.	Chandos, Marquis of	Filmer, Sir E.
Bagot, Hon. W.	Chelsea, Viscount	Finch, G.
Bailey, J., jun.	Chichester, Lord J. L.	Fitzmaurice, Hon. W.
Baillie, Colonel	Childers, J. W.	Fitzroy, Hon. H.
Baillie, H. J.	Churchill, Lord A. S.	Fleetwood, Sir P. H.
Baine, Walter	Clerk, Rt. Hn. Sir G.	Flower, Sir J.
Bankes, G.	Clifton, J. T.	Forster, M.
Barkly, H.	Clive, Viscount	Fox, S. L.
Baring, Rt. Hn. F. T.	Cockburn, Rt. Hn. Sir G.	Fuller, A. E.
Baring, T.	Cole, Hon. H. A.	Gardner, J. D.
Baring, Rt. Hn. W. B.	Colebrooke, Sir T. E.	Gaskell, J. M.
Barnard, E. G.	Collett, W. R.	Gladstone, Captain
Barrington, Viscount	Colquhoun, J. C.	Glynne, Sir S. R.
Bateson, T.	Compton, H. C.	Gordon, Hon. Capt.
Beckett, W.	Connolly, Colonel	Gore, M.
Bell, M.	Corry, Right Hon. H.	Gore, Hon. R.
Benbow, J.	Courtenay, Lord	Goring, C.
Benett, J.	Cowper, Hon. W. F.	Goulburn, Rt. Hn. H.
Bennet, P.	Craig, W. G.	Graham, Right Hon.
Bentinck, Lord G.	Cripps, W.	Sir J.
Beresford, Major	Davies, D. A. S.	Granby, Marquis of
Bernal, R.	Deedes, W.	Grey, Rt. Hon. Sir G.
Bodkin, W. H.	Denison, E. B.	Grogan, E.
Boldero, H. G.	D'Eyncourt, Rt. Hon.	Hale, R. B.
Borthwick, P.	C. T.	Halford, Sir H.
Botfield, B.	Dickinson, F. H.	Hall, Colonel
Bowes, J.	Disraeli, B.	Hamilton, W. J.
Bowles, Admiral	Dodd, G.	Hamilton, Lord C.
Boyd, J.	Douglas, Sir H.	Hanmer, Sir J.
Bramston, T. W.	Douglas, Sir C. E.	Harcourt, G. G.
Brisco, M.	Douglas, J. D. S.	Hatton, Captain V.
Broadley, H.	Douro, Marquis of	Hawes, B.
Broadwood, H.	Drummond, H. H.	Henley, J. W.

Herbert, Rt. Hon. S.	Lygon, Hon. General	Seymour, Lord
Hervey, Lord A.	Macaulay, Rt. Hn. T. B.	Sheridan, R. B.
Hildyard, T. B. T.	Mackenzie, T.	Shirley, E. J.
Hinde, J. H.	Mackenzie, W. F.	Sibthorp, Colonel
Hobhouse, Rt. Hn. Sir J.	M'Geachy, F. A.	Smith, A.
Hodgson, R.	Mahon, Viscount	Smith, J. A.
Hope, Sir J.	Mangles, R. D.	Smythe, Hon. G.
Hope, A.	Manners, Lord C. S.	Smollett, A.
Hope, G. W.	Manners, Lord J.	Somerton, Viscount
Hornby, J.	March, Earl of	Spooner, R.
Horsman, E.	Martin, C. W.	Spry, Sir S. T.
Hotham, Lord	Martin, T. B.	Stanley, E.
Howard, Hon. C. W. G.	Masterman, J.	Stanley, Hon. W. O.
Howard, Hon. E. G. G.	Maule, Rt. Hon. F.	Stanton, W. H.
Howard, P. H.	Mildmay, H. St. John	Stewart, J.
Hudson, G.	Milnes, R. M.	Stuart, H.
Hughes, W. B.	Morgan, O.	Stuart, J.
Hume, J.	Napier, Sir C.	Sutton, Hon. H. M.
Hurst, R. H.	Neville, R.	Thesiger, Sir F.
Hussey, T.	Nowdegate, C. N.	Thompson, Alderman
Irton, S.	Norreys, Sir D. J.	Tomline, G.
James, W.	O'Brien, A. S.	Trench, Sir F. W.
Jermyn, Earl of	Packe, C. W.	Tufnell, H.
Jocelyn, Viscount	Palmer, R.	Vernon, G. H.
Johnstone, Sir J.	Palmer, G.	Vivian, J. H.
Johnstone, H.	Palmerston, Viscount	Vivian, J. E.
Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.	Patten, J. W.	Vivian, Hon. Captain
Jones, Captain	Peel, Rt. Hon. Sir R.	Vyse, R. H. R. H.
Kelly, Sir F.	Peel, J.	Waddington, H. S.
Kemble, H.	Pennant, Hon. Col.	Wakley, T.
Kirk, P.	Philips, G. R.	Walpole, S. H.
Knight, F. W.	Polhill, F.	Walsh, Sir J. B.
Labouchere, Rt. Hn. H.	Pusey, P.	Wellesley, Lord C.
Lambton, H.	Rashleigh, W.	Wilshire, W.
Law, Hon. C. E.	Reid, Sir J. R.	Wodehouse, E.
Lawson, A.	Reid, Colonel	Wood, Colonel T.
Legh, G. C.	Repton, G. W. J.	Worsley, Lord
Lemon, Sir C.	Rolleston, Colonel	Wortley, Hon. J. S.
Lennox, Lord G. H. G.	Round, J.	Wrightson, W. B.
Liddell, Hon. H. T.	Rumbold, C. E.	Wyndham, Colonel C.
Loch, J.	Russell, Lord J.	Yorke, Hon. F. T.
Lockhart, A. E.	Ryder, Hon. G. D.	TELLERS.
Lockhart, W.	Sandon, Viscount	Young, J.
Lyall, G.	Scott, Hon. F.	Baring, H.

## MINORITY.

Bannerman, A.	Bowring, Dr.	Colborne, Hn. W. N. R.
Berkeley, Hon. C.	Brotherton, J.	Collett, J.
Berkeley, Hon. Capt.	Busfield, W.	Crawford, W. S.
Berkeley, Hon. H. F.	Chapman, B.	Currie, R.
Blewitt, R. J.	Christie, W. D.	Dalmeny, Lord
Bouverie, Hon. E. P.	Cobden, R.	Dalrymple, Captain

Dennistoun, J.	Layard, Captain	Ross, D. R.
Duncan, Viscount	M'Carthy, A.	Russell, Lord E.
Duncan, G.	M'Taggart, Sir J.	Stansfield, W. R. C.
Dundas, Admiral	Majoribanks, S.	Staunton, Sir G. T.
Ebrington, Viscount	Marshall, W.	Stuart, Lord J.
Ellice, E.	Martin, J.	Strutt, E.
Elphinstone, H.	Mitcalfe, H.	Tancred, H. W.
Escott, B.	Mitchell, T. A.	Thornely, T.
Etwall, R.	Moffatt, G.	Trelawny, J. S.
Evans, Sir De Lacy	Morpeth, Viscount	Troubridge, Sir E. T.
Ewart, W.	Morris, D.	Walker, R.
Fielden, J.	O'Connell, D.	Warburton, H.
Ferguson, Colonel	O'Connell, M. J.	Ward, H. G.
Fitzroy, Lord C.	O'Connell, J.	Wawn, J. T.
Fox, C. R.	Oswald, J.	White, S.
Gibson, T. M.	Parker, J.	Williams, W.
Hall, Sir B.	Pattison, J.	Wood, C.
Hastie, A.	Pechell, Captain	Yorke, H. R.
Hindley, C.	Philips, M.	TELLERS.
Hollond, R.	Plumridge, Captain	Villiers, C.
Langston, J. H.	Protheroe, E.	Bright, J.

Mr. Alderman Humphrey paired off with Mr. Mackinnon on Tuesday night, the former in favour, the latter against, Mr. Villiers's motion.

### MARCH 6.

The House having gone into Committee, after some amendments had been negatived, the resolutions were read and agreed to. Sir R. Peel next proposed the removal of the duty on maize, buckwheat, Indian corn-meal, and rice, which was agreed to. The various articles named in the resolutions down to arrow-root, were then passed seriatim.

### MARCH 9.

Corn importation resolutions were confirmed. Leave was then given to bring in a bill founded on the resolutions. The House went into Committee on the Customs' Duties Acts. Mr. Ewart proposed the admission of modern books in foreign languages duty free. A short debate followed, which ended in the amendment being withdrawn. The articles in the resolutions were then gone through.

### MARCH 13.

The report on the tariff was brought up. On the question that the resolutions be read a second time, Mr. Spooner moved as an amendment the second reading that day six months, which after a few remarks from Sir George Clerk was withdrawn. Several articles of the tariff were passed. On the proposal to reduce the duty on butter from 10s. to 2s. 6d. per cwt., Mr. Grogan moved as an amendment, that the duties on butter and cheese should remain as

in the tariff of 1842, which was lost by 213 to 111. On arriving at the article cotton hose, Sir H. Halford moved an amendment, which was lost by 190 to 102. The debate was adjourned.

#### MARCH 16.

The House resumed the consideration of the report on the customs' and corn importation acts. On the article "hops" being read, some discussion took place, after which the resolution was carried by 91 to 44. On reading the article silk, Mr. G. Banks moved its omission; a debate followed and the House divided—for the amendment 144, against it 220. The debate was again adjourned.

#### MARCH 17.

The further consideration of the resolutions on the customs' and corn importation act was resumed, and again adjourned.

#### MARCH 20.

Resumed.—The Marquis of Worcester moved the omission of the resolution respecting timber, and after considerable debate, the House divided, for the resolution 232, for the amendment 109; then permission was given to introduce the Bill, &c.

#### MONDAY, MARCH 23.

The order of the day for the second reading of the Corn Importation Bill was then read.

MR. S. CRAWFORD presented a petition from Rochdale, signed by 8,000 persons, in favour of the Bill.

SIR R. PEEL—Sir, I have two petitions to present to the House—one from Liverpool, in which the petitioners state that the commercial interests of the country are materially prejudiced by the delay of the Legislature in pronouncing a decision in regard to the commercial measures now before them (cheers). I am assured that no petition ever left Liverpool more respectably signed—that it received the signatures of the leading men of all political parties, and that some of them are those of gentlemen who have been opposed to our measures, but who now give in their adhesion to the proposals of the Government (hear, hear). The petition received in the course of a few hours 414 signatures of the leading gentlemen in Liverpool. Every banking-house in Liverpool, I am told, with but three exceptions, had signed it; the managing directors of two of these being out of town. About 214 merchants and ship-owners, and 190 brokers have signed. The petition, which states that the petitioners, having the most extensive experience, find that nearly every branch of trade is paralyzed by the delay in carrying the measures of the Government. It further states "That your petitioners, while they disclaim all interference with due deliberation in matters of such vast importance, would humbly pray that an end may be put to their suspense by passing into a law, as speedily as possible, the measures proposed by her Majesty's Government, and which your petitioners verily believe will prove highly beneficial to the interests of this vast commercial empire." The other petition is from Manchester. This received its signatures in twenty-four hours, and has

1,122 signatures attached to it. It is signed by all the bankers in Manchester, and by fifty-five members of the town-council. It is also signed by most of the large houses engaged in the manufacturing and spinning trade, in the machine making, in the country trade, and in the East and West Indian, Canadian, United States, German, Russian, and Mediterranean trades. I am informed that the amount of capital represented by the houses who have signed this petition is £30,000,000 (hear, hear), and that the number of persons employed by them is 120,000 (hear, hear). The petitioners state that, "In common with the entire manufacturing and commercial interests of the country, they have observed with the liveliest satisfaction, the wise and comprehensive measures introduced by her Majesty's Government--measures which will tend greatly to benefit this densely-populated district." The petitioners, therefore, pray the House to "put an end to the doubt and uncertainty now existing, and to prevent the occurrence of commercial disasters which may seriously cripple the industry and resources of the country, by immediately passing into a law the Customs' and Corn Importation Act" (hear, hear).

MR. ETWALL called the particular attention of the House to a petition from nearly 700 Hampshire agricultural labourers, men and women, resident in the unions of Droxford and Stoneham, and other parishes between Southampton and Winchester. The petition originated at a public evening meeting of labourers held at Sheril Heath, Waltham Chase, on Monday evening, February 23, and was signed by a large number of those present at that meeting. The petitioners stated that they had been struggling on, from year to year, with wages barely sufficient for subsistence under Corn Law Protection, until they despair of any amendment of their condition under these restrictive laws, and therefore earnestly entreat an immediate and total Repeal of the Corn Laws.

MR. RASHLEIGH presented petitions from twenty places in the county of Cornwall against the bill.

On the question that the bill be now read a second time,

MR. E. YORKE said that, as he was intrusted with a petition, signed by an immense number of his constituents, against the bill, he could not give a silent vote on this question. The Right Hon. Baronet had presented petitions from an enormous monied confederacy in favour of the bill, but he (Mr. Yorke) was bound to resist it on behalf of his constituents, and his intention was to move that the bill be read a second time that day six months. If the anticipations which the Right Hon. Baronet had formed of the favourable operation of these measures were not realized, he would inflict an amount of injury upon an important interest, for which a life of repentance, however sincere, could not be a sufficient atonement (cheers). The principle of Protection was recognized by the great majority of the constituency of this country, who made those now upon the Treasury benches the accredited organs of that principle. If the Right Hon. Baronet was right in attributing much of the manufacturing distress to the operation of the Corn Law, why had he not repealed it in 1842, rather than keep down the people, as he then did, by armed bands and military rule? He (Mr. Yorke) represented a large agricultural constituency, and he had on many occasions placed himself

at issue with them in defending the political honour of the Right Hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury (hear, hear), as he would have defended his own private integrity (hear). He knew pretty well, therefore, what were the sentiments of his constituents on this subject. He was informed that not less than £5,000,000 had been laid out on the improvement of landed property in the district he represented, and that money had been expended on the faith of Protection. If the agriculturists had not enjoyed Protection, much of the land in that district never could have been brought into cultivation, or, at all events, it could not have remunerated the cultivators. He objected to the admission of the principle of Free Trade without the most searching investigation into the burdens which pressed with great force on the agricultural body, with a view to their equalization, so that all parties might have a fair start in the national race. When the Noble Lord (J. Russell) the Member for the city of London, in 1829, first brought forward his plan of a fixed duty, the Right Hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department, referring to the Tithe Commutation Act, told the Noble Lord that if, when he passed that act, he had any intention of altering the basis on which it was framed, he was guilty of a gross fraud on the public. And now, adopting the same language, he would tell her Majesty's Ministers, if, in 1842, when the Corn Bill of that year was passed, they had any intention of altering the basis on which it was framed, (and he had come to the conclusion that they had all along been arguing against their convictions)—they were guilty of a gross fraud on the country. He wished Hon. Gentlemen opposite joy of their new allies on the Treasury benches. They would use them for the purpose of striking this one blow, and when struck they would discard them, having no trust in the metal of which they were composed. The Right Hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury looked to posterity for indemnity, and no doubt the pen of the faithful historian would do him justice. The historian would say of him, that gifted with great natural and possessing many acquired powers, notwithstanding some slight deviation in former years from the straight course of political wisdom, he was again trusted on account of his professions by a great party, whom he again deceived. He would say that he stood alone against the party he had betrayed.

" He stood alone amidst his band,  
" Without one trusting heart or hand."

In conclusion, he begged to move that the bill be read a second time that day six months (hear, hear).

SIR J. Y. BULLER seconded the amendment. He had supported the measures of the Government in 1842, greatly to the risk of his seat, but he had done so for the purpose of adjusting the Corn Law on a basis that would not be disturbed at least during the present Parliament. He was, therefore, greatly disappointed when he heard that the Right Hon. Baronet had determined, within three short years, to abandon altogether the principle of protection to British industry, and repeal his own Corn Bill. His constituents viewed this measure with great alarm; the reduction of prices which would probably result from it, would produce a great change in the manage-

ment of farms and estates; and severe distress among the agricultural population would inevitably follow. The partial failure of the potato crop was no justification of this measure. If famine were impending in Ireland, the bill would not be found an adequate remedy. It would have been much better to liberate the foreign corn in bond free of duty; or, if the case required it, to give it as a bounty to Ireland, rather than abolish a law which was doing what its promoters wished, giving the population a fair supply of bread at a moderate rate, merely because there had occurred a casual failure of one of our crops.

MR. M'GEACHY could not shelter himself under the wing of that most extraordinary doctrine which had been laid down by the Noble Lord the Member for Liverpool, a doctrine mischievous in proportion to the respectability and weight of the quarter from which it had proceeded. Surely it was as individuals that they were responsible, and not as members of any one sect or party. It might be true that every man in England who had sat in her Majesty's Councils as a Cabinet Minister, with scarcely an exception, was now agreed as to the impolicy of continuing the existing Corn Laws. Still that would be no justification of his vote in favour of this measure, unless he were himself convinced, as convinced he was, that the measure was in itself both politic and just (hear, hear). It was very easy to talk of our constitution as a territorial constitution, yet the men who now talked most loudly of the rights of electors were, in many cases, the very men who had degraded that most important class—the tenant farmers of England—into the mere political tools of their party purposes (hear, hear). And he confessed, that in coming to a conclusion upon that question, the old Spanish proverb had had considerable weight with him,—“Show me your friends, and I will tell you what you are;” and when he looked to the friends of the Government on the present occasion, what did he find? Was my Lord Talbot, for example, resident amongst the undrained lands and the agricultural helots of the county of Buckingham? or were many other enlightened agriculturists, who supported these measures, answerable for the condition of Sussex, where a large farmer told a friend of his (Mr. M'Geachy's) the other day, as they were looking at a field in which there was a lamentable preponderance of thistles over turnips, “that he must own he had been very unfortunate in his turnips this year, but that for his part he never saw any harm come of thistles?” (laughter). It only remained for him to express his earnest hope that, when that measure had passed, they should proceed to other measures calculated to meet the wants of the great mass of the people, their moral and intellectual, as well as their physical wants; and, looking at the state of some of our great manufacturing towns, he thought that there was now a noble opportunity for employing that enormous fund of the Anti-Corn Law League, now likely to be useless for the purposes for which it was raised, in erecting some peaceful trophy of their victory, and for identifying the names of their leaders, not with remembrance of a temporary and evanescent and most questionable agitation, but with some permanent establishments for the relief of the poor, the destitute, and the oppressed (cheers). For these and other reasons he had come,

after full and number of impt. Undoubtedly, in the conclusion that it was the part of the First Lord, he owed to the constituency he represented, with the great interests of the country, and with that he owed to his own personal honour, to give his support to the measures now proposed by her Majesty's Government, convinced as he was that they were measures which would tend to promote the general welfare of all classes of the community, and place the future greatness and prosperity of this empire upon the one sole foundation upon which that greatness and that prosperity could securely rest, namely, the loyal affections of a contented and confiding people (hear, hear).

MR. PACKE said the Hon. Gentleman who had just sat down, at the conclusion of his speech, had alluded to the application of the fund raised by the Anti-Corn Law League. He (Mr. Packe) had no doubt that, as that fund had been raised for the purpose of agitation, and for no other purpose, to no other purpose would it ever be devoted. In arguing this question, they (the Protectionists) had the allied forces of the Treasury Bench and the Gentlemen opposite to deal with. Much as he had on former occasions admired the eloquent reasoning of the Right Hon. Baronet, he had listened in vain for any arguments in his speeches to support this alteration of the Corn Law, and he thought the country would have been better satisfied if the Right Hon. Baronet had given no reasons at all. He objected to the measure because he considered first, that it would inflict a most serious and vital injury upon the best interests of the country; secondly, that it was a breach of faith; and thirdly, above all, that he could not support it without a violation of consistency and honour.

MR. F. MAULE could not say of this proposition that it had his entire and cordial support, because it did not go to the extent which he wished to see it reach. Still, as it was, he accepted it with gratitude, and should endeavour to give it his most cordial support. It had been his duty to investigate the feelings of landlords, farmers, and agricultural labourers on the other side of the Tweed, and amongst that class to which he more immediately belonged; and he had no hesitation in saying that the result of that investigation had been that there was not only no panic amongst the landlords or farmers, but, in spite of all that had been said with reference to this measure, agricultural arrangements were proceeding with increased prosperity from day to day; and he could give practical examples of what he had stated. When the proposition was first made, there was a document laid before the public, emanating from one to whom, though he (Mr. F. Maule) might differ from him as to the measures he took for advocating his views, the country was under a deep debt of gratitude, he meant the Hon. Member for Stockport; and his letter to the farmers of the country, stating his opinion of the measures proposed, was canvassed by the farmers, and at one of the largest markets, within ten days after the Right Hon. Baronet had developed his measure; the farmers, after hearing the arguments in its support, came at once to the conclusion, that instead of its being put off for three years, their interests would have been better con-

sulted if the abolition of duties; and severe distress among the agriculturists would vitably follow. The partial failure of the measure. If famine were in itself, but as one calculated to foster to liberating foreign corn of commercial freedom would not only allay irritations as between parties and individuals, but would promote peace amongst nations. He considered that the altered tone of feeling in America was not only to be imputed to the calm and dignified manner in which all parties treated the question in England; but he attributed this result partly to the prospect of commercial freedom. Whether that freedom of intercourse extended to America or other countries it could not fail to operate in favour of peace.

MR. CHOLMONDELEY thought that, under the circumstances, it would have been better if the Right Hon. Baronet had appealed to the country. He knew that, upon constitutional grounds, such a course might have been open to objection; but he confessed that he should have thought it safe and advisable. It was true that the House of Commons was considered to stand in the same relation to the country at large, as each individual did towards his own constituents; that no Member was bound from time to time to appeal to his constituents upon every fresh question that arose; and that therefore the House was not bound to do so. That might be all very well in theory, but it would not do in practice. He could not himself approve of the measure, and he would not give it his support; but he could bear his testimony as to the conduct of the Minister who had brought it forward. He could understand a change of opinion, and the open avowal of that change; but what he did regret was the instances he saw of men thinking one way and voting another. This was what did the real mischief; this was what went far to destroy the bond of union between the representatives and the represented, and to destroy public confidence in public men; if men did so play fast and loose they did more mischief to the country than all the Corn Bills that could be introduced (hear, hear).

MR. H. VERNON said, that if, as it had been argued, Parliament was not in a state competent to judge of this measure, it was the duty of the House to address her Majesty praying her to dissolve the Parliament; and if such an amendment had been moved instead of that the bill be read a second time that day six months, it would have been more consonant with the views expressed by Hon. Gentlemen. He himself stood in a position of some peculiarity; for he was obnoxious to those shafts to which Hon. Members were exposed, who had heretofore been ranged on the side of Protection, and who had felt compelled, by an imperative sense of duty, to take another course, a course which was not the most congenial to his sentiments, nor most accordant with his foregone conclusions. He had come down to the House the other night in the hope that a 5s. fixed duty would have found advocates in many Hon. Gentlemen on the opposite benches. He had always considered that a moderate fixed duty was the best for the agriculturists; but he had been compelled, like all public men, to act with a great body; it was of no use to take up an "insulated" position (laughter and Opposition cheers) when there

after ~~that~~ a vast number of important questions which attached a man to that ~~party~~. Undoubtedly, in early life, he had never attached himself to the party of the First Lord of the Treasury, and he had not ~~constituted~~ ~~himself~~ ~~as~~ ~~one~~ his supporter till in 1836 he had seen the necessity of joining ~~the~~ ~~standard~~, and ever since he had admired the wisdom and integrity ~~of~~ ~~his~~ ~~course~~. He must say, also, that throughout America he had found but one feeling among the friends of peace, who said that if we would only interest, by prosperity, the western states of America, which were invulnerable to our arms, and inaccessible to our commerce—for we had already the interests of the eastern states in our favour—we should do more to promote the peace of America than all the concessions we should make in the Oregon or elsewhere. He had received a letter from a very intelligent merchant at Boston, who said that the effect of the proposed alteration in the tariff would be that England would completely fortify herself against all competition in manufactures. Again, it was not the experience of the three prosperous years of 1843, 1844, and 1845, but the experience of the three famine years of 1840, 1841, and 1842, that had convinced the Right Hon. Baronet of the inutility of the sliding scale. And it was upon those grounds he should support the second reading of this bill.

CAPTAIN BERKELEY said that he had entered the House believing that the Corn Laws, as they were then constituted, were for the good of the country, though he had always voted with the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton, for an inquiry into them, as he conceived that such an inquiry was just and right. However, when he found that the Noble Lord whose political opinions had generally guided his own, united with the Right Hon. Gentleman opposite, who he might say, was one of the greatest statesmen of his time, for one purpose, in which neither of them, especially the Right Hon. Gentleman, could have any personal interest, he (Captain Berkeley), as a practical man, without pretending to understand, as some Hon. Gentlemen opposite had pretended to understand, political economy, felt himself bound to give way to the Right Hon. Baronet, and to vote in favour of this bill.

SIR R. H. INGLIS said there were two features of the Government scheme—one was that it would be an immense cost to the country; and the second, that it would be attended with injury to the tithe-owner. On the 1st of February, 1849, the revenue would exhibit a loss of £1,500,000 from the measures now proposed. As to tithes, they were the oldest legal right in the country, and when they were abandoned, as they recently were, the tithe-owner had the strongest moral as well as legal claim upon those who profited by the exchange. The landowner might by an improved state of agricultural science, get the same rent for his land as at present, although he (Sir R. Inglis) could not be brought to believe it (hear, hear). But the tithe-owner was excluded from this. He received an unvarying quantity, at varying prices, and if the measures of the Government reduced the price of corn to the extent anticipated, he would be, in many cases, absolutely ruined. How the Government could reconcile this measure with a sense of justice towards the tithe-owner, he did not know. Tenterden steeple had been said to be the

cause of Goodwin Sands, and he saw just as much connexion between the distress of Ireland and the measures on the table of the House for the relief of that distress. He was not prepared to forget the claims of the agricultural interest to the protection they enjoyed in common, he believed, with the same class in every other country. As an advocate of protection to native industry, he should give his cordial support to the amendment before the House (cheers).

MR. CHILDERS said the price of bread was lower in England than anywhere, and the price of corn was not much higher. The price of bread, according to the foreign consuls' returns, was much lower in London than in Antwerp, Ostend, Dantzic, or Odessa, and at Marseilles, a port at no great distance from Odessa, in October, November, and December, last year, the price of corn was higher than it was in this country. If this measure passed, and a Free Trade in Corn were sanctioned, although we might draw our supplies from Dantzic, Odessa, and other places, when corn was cheap, he was satisfied, from the great demand which existed in this country, that prices would not fall below what they were under the present system. As an agriculturist he felt no hesitation in supporting the second reading of the bill. He believed that our adoption of the principle of Free Trade would lead to an amelioration of the tariffs of all other nations, for he was convinced they would be induced to imitate the example we thus set them.

On the motion of LORD POLLINGTON the debate was then adjourned.

#### TUESDAY, MARCH 24.

On the order of the day for the resumption of the debate on the second reading of the Corn Importation Bill being read,

LORD POLLINGTON said it was his painful duty to vote upon this question against Her Majesty's Government, and he must ask the indulgence of the House whilst he attempted to explain the reasons for that vote. The conclusions he had formed were quite independent of any party. He admitted that those who called for Protection were bound to show that, under that system, there would be a sufficient supply of food at reasonable prices, and they were prepared to show that there would be. Before removing Protection the Right Hon. Baronet ought to have removed all the burdens and disabilities of the farmer, who must apply science to cultivation, and must for that end give an expensive education to his sons, and those who had the good fortune to possess land adapted to that cultivation ought to be allowed to grow hops and tobacco. He sincerely hoped that the measure of the Right Hon. Baronet, would be as successful as it could possibly be, and that our example would be followed by other countries. With regard to Russia, some tendency had been shown there towards Free Trade; but this example other countries were not likely to follow. In France no doubt there were liberal men in the Chambers; but such men as Guizot were not the true exponents of public opinion in France on the subject of Free Trade. No one could lament more sincerely than he did the failure of the crops in Ireland, yet he hoped and believed that the extent of that failure

was by no means so great as it had been represented. But, be that as it might, the House ought not to hold out to the country any expectation that a temporary remedy would suffice for that which could not be otherwise regarded than as a source of permanent evil. He regretted to think that this unhappy question had produced more differences between members and their constituents than perhaps any other question that could be named. He had seen one letter from a member to his constituents, in which the writer said, that though those who returned him had asked no pledge, yet he felt that under present circumstances he ought not to retain his seat and vote for the Ministerial measure. That was the case of more members than one, and a very painful case it was. For his part, however, he had resolved to vote against the measure, and nothing should induce him to depart from that principle.

MR. PLUMPTRE considered the measure very rash and very perilous; and even to those who expected the most from it he doubted not that it would prove insufficient and unsatisfactory. Notwithstanding all that had been said about the low price of grain having no influence on the rate of wages, he denied this altogether, and was able to say from long experience as a farmer, that the rates of wages were very materially affected by the prices of corn. Amongst other objections to the bill he entertained a strong opinion that it would have a most injurious effect upon the interests of the tithe-owners. They ought not to make an alteration of the Corn Laws without altering the Tithe Commutation Act. He had been called upon to vote for this bill on account of the poor, but he believed that he should be most widely and most permanently promoting the prosperity of the whole people by giving this measure his most determined opposition (hear, hear).

MR. HAWES referred to the petitions from the large towns, praying that this measure should pass without unnecessary delay, as proving that there was nothing perilous or rash in the Government proposals, and that they would promote the general prosperity and welfare of the country. He must tell Hon. Gentlemen on the Protectionist benches that there never had been a great question agitated by members of any mark or note which had met with so little of public sympathy as their opposition. Where was the sympathy with them in the silk trade? Where were the petitions from the consumers of timber opposing Her Majesty's Ministry? The general opinion was, that, taken as a whole, these measures were highly conducive to the public welfare; and, in obstructing them, Hon. Gentlemen had not sufficiently studied the temper and spirit of the times. He (Mr. Hawes) would frankly say that he expected a much lower average price of corn under the operation of the present bill than we had hitherto had in this country (hear, hear). But he was also of opinion that it could be borne by the English agriculturist, who, in the diminished cost of production and the increased amount of produce, could afford to grow wheat to a profit at a much lower price. In 1836, one witness examined before the agricultural committee of that year gave it as his opinion that wheat could be grown to a profit by the British farmer at 40s. a quarter, and he (Mr. Hawes) believed it could. The operation of the Corn Laws upon our social system

had been most mischievous. Its tendency had been to diminish profits, and thereby to stimulate the manufacturer to invent new machinery and adopt more economical processes. No doubt the manufacturing system carried with it large social evils, which it was the object of the House to counteract, but they were mainly attributable to the course of legislation in that House. Whenever you interfered with the profits of trade in this great country, similar results would happen. He should give Her Majesty's Ministers his cordial and entire support on this question. He believed that the present measure would be received with gratitude by the great mercantile and manufacturing interests, and that it would remove many of the social evils under which this country laboured (hear, hear).

SIR J. TROLLOPE said the Hon. Member who had just sat down had assumed that the people of this country were unanimous in favour of the present bill. But in his part of the country (South Lincolnshire), which was a purely agricultural district, the unanimity was entirely the other way, for he had found but one individual who held up his hand in favour of the Government measures. The agriculturists in the county with which he was connected had not been behindhand in providing for the food of the people. He could not call to mind a single piece of waste and unenclosed land in the part of the county he represented, except in the borough of Stamford, where the rights of the freemen had prevented the enclosure. There had been a great increase in the productiveness of this district. From information he had obtained from the inspectors and clerks of markets in his own county, he found that in the 14 years from 1828 to 1842 there had been an increase of 70 per cent. in the article of wheat alone (hear, hear). Since that period there had been so much additional drainage effected, so much breaking up of inferior pasture land, and the use of artificial manures, that a great further increase must have taken place in the productiveness of that county. He might safely take the increase during the last 16 or 18 years at 100 per cent. (hear, hear). The population of that district had not increased at a greater ratio than 20 per cent., and there was therefore an increase of produce amounting to 20 per cent. applicable to other districts, to Manchester, Newcastle, Leeds, and London. The access to those markets had hitherto been by the circuitous and expensive route of coasting and canal navigation. But the agriculturist was not permitted to get cheaper ships from the Baltic and the Rhine to carry his produce to market. We knew that foreign ships could be built and manned more cheaply than ours, but there was no Free Trade proposed in this respect. Although he differed from Her Majesty's Government on many points of their policy, he must say he thought they had adopted a wise and judicious course with regard to Ireland, in having—with a cautious, and almost sparing hand—afforded means of employment to the people, not as a gift, but as a loan (hear, hear). He could not consider that the present Free Trade measures of Her Majesty's Ministers would settle this question. If they intended to be successful they must go on in the course they were pursuing; for they could not relieve the commercial portion of the community from restrictions without extending similar relief to the agriculturists; and till this was done there would be no

settlement of the question. The agriculturists had been charged with neglecting the poor; but he would state that in no district were the poor better off than in the extensive agricultural district he had the honour to represent. During the last 26 years the wages he, as a landowner, had paid to his labourers, varied from 9s. to 15s. a-week. The average amount of wages was 12s., and that was the present rate, but the better class of labourers could earn a larger sum. If, however, the present bill was adopted, the consequent restriction of cultivation would necessarily compel the farmers to reduce their expenses; and that reduction would first be applied to the wages of the labourer (hear, hear). He had felt it his duty to his constituents to express their views and his own on this subject, and he would give his strenuous opposition to the measure of Her Majesty's Government.

SIR J. HANMER said he agreed with the Right Hon. Member for the county of Perth, who spoke last night, that it was desirable for some, and justifiable for others who supported this measure, and were wholly dependent upon the land, to rise and state their reasons, lest it should be thought simply an emanation of that "enormous money confederacy," of which his Hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire had spoken rather bitterly. That Hon. Gentleman invoked justice to aid him in support of what he believed to be protection, which yet he did not regard as equal in endurance to justice; for he contemplated the possibility of this Corn Law being repealed—that was, rendered unnecessary by time. And therefore, his Hon. Friend opened all the question, of whether this was not the time at which it should be repealed by Parliament, looking at the condition of agriculture, which it might be was able now, in its own interests, best understood, to dispense with the existing system of what was called Protection. He thought the condition of the world, at home and abroad, rendered it full time. He believed it was necessary that a great example should be shown of what the true policy of such a country as this really was, and the example was not without its fruits even now. The revenues and expenditure of England and France had been contrasted by Baron Charles Dupin; and since the opinion of foreigners had been called the voice of cotemporary posterity—at all events it was uninfluenced by party and personal topics, and by philippics, such as one heard occasionally in that House, but looked to the main current of affairs, and took its judgment thence,—let them see whether, in the policy of this country, influenced as it had been for a long series of years by the Right Hon. Gentleman, governed as it was by him now, there was any inconsistency apparent to Baron Dupin. So far from it, he saw but one object steadily pursued from 1815 to the present day; and when he drew his conclusion and his comparison with the contrary system in his own country, it was not in favour of France. The case of the Government was that great public emergency called on them to proceed. He believed that this was true. On the one hand, reason, experience, the concurrent voice of statesmen, the warnings of many years, the accents of 1842, stronger and deeper than them all, and which sounded in the ears of this Parliament, called upon this Parliament, rather than on any other, to take the steps to which they were incited by the Government, before which party spirit bowed its head,

to which they were equally incited by the Right Hon. Gentleman, or with a change of opinion every whit as great, and as amply acknowledged, by the Noble Lord. On the other hand, what was it that they proposed who were opposed to the present measure? What was their policy? What did they design?—a new fixed duty, a new sliding scale?—this one they had condemned. He knew not what was their policy, but if he wanted to find a comparison for them who relied on the unsafe and unsteady protection of Corn Laws, he should say that they were like Milton's Norway fisherman, who anchored his boat on the back of a whale (hear, hear).

LORD EBRINGTON regretted, that though we had the prospect of a total Repeal of the Corn Laws, we were to be cursed with a three years' sliding scale, against which the Noble Member for London (Lord J. Russell) so prophetically warned the House on the 14th of February, 1842, as not being adapted to a harvest in which the quality of the crop varied. It was unwise to preserve this vestige of a pernicious system, which had, in fact, nothing to do with protection, but which doubled the uncertainties of trade, by making the importer unable to calculate either when or at what price he should be able to sell; and the Government thus, while conceding in substance to the Anti-Corn Law League, left enough to justify the continuance of the agitation. The present season too was peculiarly favourable for the total repeal, there being no great accumulations abroad; whereas there would very likely be a store got ready to be brought into competition at the end of three years. If he were called upon to suggest a measure for settling this matter, it would be one in accordance with the opinions of a gentleman who stood high in the estimation of all who had considered this subject—he meant Mr. Scriven. He would appoint real property commissioners to go into the whole subject, recommending that they should take steps to assimilate the condition of England with respect to the facility of dealing with landed property to the state of matters on the continent, where it was transferred from hand to hand as easily as the three per cent. consols in this country; so that by degrees all classes would come to have an interest in the welfare and safety of the owners of the soil.

MR. RASHLEIGH appealed to the Right Hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government if he was determined to yield to the unscrupulous and unconstitutional demands made upon him by the Anti-Corn Law League. He considered that if the measure of the Government passed it would be neither more nor less than a bonus to further agitation. The Hon. Gentleman then read a letter from one of his constituents in East Cornwall who employs about 3,000 persons, in order to show that in that county the measures of Government were not approved of; and concluded by stating that, however painful, he felt it to be his duty to withdraw all his confidence from the Right Hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government, as he could not allow himself to be drawn through the muck and mire of expediency to adopt the new notions of the Right Hon. Gentleman.

MR. F. BARING said, that though some of the points started by his Noble Friend (Lord Ebrington) were not unworthy of discussion,

yet, seeing good in the Government measure, and the seeds of future good, he should give it his cordial support. One thing had developed itself in the course of the debate—the determination of a large body of Members to form a party acting independently of the Government, and independently of the parties into which the House was usually divided. To those gentlemen he should wish to put a question as to the course they were about to pursue. Honourable Gentlemen,—he thought with his Hon. and Learned Friend the Member for Liskeard,—when they chose a leader and joined themselves together into a party, were bound to express to the House the course they were inclined to pursue. It was in no feeling of personal disrespect that he addressed Hon. Gentlemen opposite. It was no surprise to him to see—and he had seen with pleasure—the spirit and talent with which they had fought the battle in the disadvantageous circumstances into which they had been cast; but he asked what they proposed to do with the present Corn Law? It was very well for an individual to rise up and oppose the measures of the Government, but it would be almost presumptuous in an individual to propose a different course, for he could have no power to carry out his views; and accordingly no one Member could be justly called on to state his views; but it was not so with a party; and if Hon. Gentlemen rejected the present measure, let them state what was the measure they were prepared as a party to lay before the country. He wished to ask them if they thought they could go to the country upon the question of a fixed duty? And if they thought they could not, he would like to know to what kind of a sliding scale they were to attach themselves? He wished to ask the Noble Lord (Lord George Bentinck), who was the leader of the party, and who had shown so much ability in addressing the House, to have the goodness to state to that House and the country, not in figurative language, but in plain prose, the business scheme by which he was prepared to stand. He (Mr. Baring) would also like to know what was the expectation they had of the result of their opposition to this measure? It was quite clear that the opinion of this House was in favour of the measure of her Majesty's Government; but he believed that some expectation was entertained by Hon. Gentlemen opposite that the bill would be thrown out in another place. Now, he would ask those Hon. Gentlemen whether they had counted the cost of the opposition which they were about to court? (hear, hear). Some Hon. Gentlemen proposed to meet the difficulties of the case by an appeal to the country. But he begged to be allowed to ask them, even if they succeeded in their appeal to the country, were they perfectly certain they would secure Protection? He would suppose that they had succeeded in filling the Treasury bench with men perfectly able to meet those who now occupied that bench as well as those who formerly occupied it. He would suppose that they had secured a majority in that House; but had they no other enemy to encounter? He entreated them to look for a moment, independent of party, to the whole course of every Government since 1815. If they looked to the history of the administration of commerce they would find one continued course of relaxation. One Administration might have gone quicker, and another might have gone slower; but

whether it was the Government of Lord Right Hon. Gentleman, whatever Administration they might hit as great, and as amply find in the commercial policy of each. On the other hand, what was it? What did he (Mr. Baring) draw from this measure? What was a Free Trade influenza in Downing-street? A new fixed duty, a new (loud cries of "hear, hear"). However able or wise they knew not what be those who formed a Government for the purpose for them who the principle of Protection, he (Mr. Baring) had no laws, he should as to the result,—they would soon find themselves anchored and follow the principles of their predecessors (hear). Agitation, not the true cause of the defeat of those who advocated the principle of Protection; it was reason, justice, truth, by which they were betrayed. They were silently undermined by the stream of time, because their castle was built upon the sand (cheers).

MR. SHAW said, his object in rising was to refer to some of the official documents that had been laid on the table relating to the apprehended famine and fever in Ireland. Some time since he had stated his opinion in that House, that the potato failure in Ireland had been exaggerated, and that Her Majesty's Government had been misled into an undue alarm by the reports which they had received. He was well aware of the unpopularity of such a statement; but in a matter of such grave importance he felt it a duty to state what he in all sincerity believed. He fully joined in declaring that any failure of the potato crop in Ireland (and he admitted there had been some) was a great aggravation of the ordinary misery of the people; and he had given a ready support to those measures of the Government which had had for their object to give employment to the unemployed, food to the hungry, and medical attendance to the sick poor. Still he thought the evil had been exaggerated. He did not accuse either the Government, or those by whom they had been misled, of intentional exaggeration; but that there had been, in fact, exaggeration—that the Government had, in fact, been misled, he now again asserted, and he was prepared to prove. With regard to the paper headed "Disease" (Ireland), presented to the House on the 13th of the present month, introduced so pompously and with such threats of extinguishing his (Mr. Shaw's) representations by the immense impression it was to make upon the House. He (Mr. Shaw) lamented that even so much sickness and apprehension of sickness prevailed at the present time in Ireland as that return set forth, but he did not recollect a year in which at that season the same might not be said with truth of the sanitary condition of that country, and a more complete failure of the promise, as compared with the performance, to establish any alarming increase of fever as the consequence of famine he had never met with (hear, hear). The paper was headed "The most serious representations made by the several medical superintendents of public institutions." He believed the medical superintendents of public institutions in Ireland were in number nearly 700, and all the extracts given in the paper in answer, he presumed, to a circular, only amounted to 108. He (Mr. Shaw) had analyzed these, and he found of the 108 that only 29 gave any positive opinion that fever or other epidemic had been caused by scarcity of food. Six, who reported that fever had appeared, de-

yet, seeing good in the Government, not owing to the scarcity of food; others attributed apprehension of disease to various other causes; good, he should give it his share, bad habitations, insufficient clothing, and, above itself in the course of the employment (hear, hear). The following extracts, which of Members to form a committee at random, afforded fair specimens of what these ment, and independent "commissions" principally were:—"Apprehends fever in distri- usually divided. Strongly recommends establishment of a fever hospital." tion as to the single-bodied men and an equal number of women, besides many Gentlemen, farmers, are seeking employment. Apprehends breaking out Member for disease. The people being unemployed, are unable to purchase themselves. Outbreak of fever frequent in summer months, and spreads House rapidly for want of an hospital." "5,000 or 6,000 poor unemployed. Breaking out of disease apprehended in the spring and summer. Suggests the erection of a fever hospital in districts where destitution is heavily felt. Medical district of officer embraces a diameter of 12 miles from his residence." Nothing could be more natural, nor more just, than that medical officers should recommend the establishment of fever hospitals, and a better provision for the sick poor in districts where no doubt such were wanting, and that seemed to him the whole drift of the return (hear). He had then endeavoured to show, from the market prices of potatoes throughout Ireland, which should be the best criterion; from a comparison of the Government's own reports; and from an analysis of the fever return, that there was at present nothing approaching to a famine in Ireland. From all this, it is evident that fears have been magnified not a little. The Right Hon. Baronet, too, at the head of the Government, had rested so great a part of the case of his present measure on the foundation of the potato failure in Ireland, that he (Mr. Shaw) felt the more justified in dwelling upon it (hear); but, for his own part, if he were to admit that the failure had been to the utmost extent represented, he still should be at a loss to understand why the whole commercial policy of a great empire should have been changed to meet a casualty which in this climate every thinking man who had supported the existing system of Corn Laws must always have contemplated as possible; and, if the system was good for anything, it must have been good to provide against contingencies to which they were constantly subject. He (Mr. Shaw) still believed the measure would be disastrous to the best interests of England; but still more unquestionably so to Ireland (cheers). When he saw that in the year ending the 5th of January last, there had been imported into Great Britain from Ireland upwards of 3,250,000 quarters of corn and flour of Irish growth, he could not comprehend those new political economists who said, if by the repeal of the Corn Laws you removed the artificial price that was then paid for their corn in England, it would be left at home for the poor Irish farmers and their own families to eat (hear, hear). The Hon. Member here made a quotation from *Hansard* of a speech of the Right Hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury in 1841; and then proceeded to say that the gentlemen sitting around him (Mr. Shaw) acted on a simple principle, which, but for them, would have become obsolete—to support what they thought right, and oppose what they deemed wrong (hear, hear). They incurred none of the

responsibility of a change of opinions, occasioned by expediency, and not by conviction ; they had no thoughts of, or wishes for office (cheers) ; and they were, nevertheless, by no means so apprehensive as the Right Hon. Gentleman opposite of an appeal to the country (cheers). If the measure was to become law, he (Mr. Shaw) earnestly hoped that his anticipations of its ill effects might not be realized (hear). But at least throughout the present generation the mode of carrying it would remain an indelible disgrace to English statesmanship (cheers). It had not only shaken all public confidence in public men, but the ramifications of its evils were absolutely untraceable (cheers). It had not only broken party ties and destroyed personal friendships, but, setting constituents against their representatives, friend against friend, father against son, and son against father (cheers), it had convulsed all the relations of social and domestic life (cheers). They must all participate of the evil, they would all share the sorrow ; but the consolation of himself and those friends who sat around him would be, that they escaped the degradation. [The Right Hon. Gentleman was loudly cheered on resuming his seat.]

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER presumed that the cheers with which the concluding remarks of his Right Hon. Friend had been received by those around him were chiefly to be ascribed to the peroration of his speech, in which he animadverted with his accustomed severity upon the conduct of those with whom he was formerly connected, and to whom he was at present opposed. He first stated that the accounts on the table represented nothing more than the ordinary state of scarcity in Ireland (hear). And what was his inference from this ? That with a population suffering under this degree of starvation, which every day's account confirmed in the strongest manner, with a great increase in sickness, arising from destitution—then the Government came forward and asked for means for adding to the quantity of food in the country, so as to prevent the future recurrence of this calamity. The Right Hon. Gentleman thought it consistent with his duty to object to the measures of the Government, the purpose of which was a more extensive introduction of food, and the diffusion of comfort among the population. Let him read to the House what were the statements with respect to the population of Ireland at this moment—whether it was the ordinary state or not. He would begin with the most favoured part of Ireland,—Ulster. From Market-hill the report was, “Fever, diarrhœa, and dyspepsia have increased considerably, and are in many cases traceable to the use of unsound potatoes. It is very probable that fever will break out and spread, especially among the lower orders.” From Belturbet, in Cavan, the report was, “Dyspepsia, dysentery, and diarrhœa, caused by unsound food ; cottiers are without even tainted potatoes for food ; many unemployed poor are in a starving condition ; breaking out of disease, arising from scarcity of food.” From the Tullagh Dispensary, Clare, the reports were “Fever patients have increased near two-thirds, compared with the last year ; many of the poor unemployed ; potatoes daily getting worse.” This statement mentioned the want of employment. What was want of employment in Ireland when food was scarce ? The people of Ireland were not gene-

rally employed on wages; they lived on the produce of their land; the potato was to them their chief subsistence during the period of the year in which they had no employment. Therefore, when it was stated that the people were unemployed, and that the potatoes on which they had relied were diseased, it was to be construed as a total failure in the means of subsistence for themselves and their families. And he thought the House would be satisfied that this was no ordinary case of distress; that it was an occasion which called upon the House to make those exertions to relieve that distress in which it had so readily concurred, and he believed that it would not give credit to the statements of the Right Hon Gentleman, and underrate the danger to the people. The Right Hon. Gentleman had said that this was not a moment for the means taken by the Government. He (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) knew not what means the Right Hon. Gentleman would have taken. He said he did not consider consequences, but went straight to his object. But the Right Hon. Gentleman was not responsible for public affairs, and for the measures necessary to relieve a whole people suffering under great distress, and he ought to make some allowance for those who were placed in a different situation, and were in the responsible position of being required to watch over the condition of that people, even if this be a measure brought forward without regard to political consistency, which the Right Hon. Gentleman thought so great a virtue. He (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) did not know how the Right Hon. Gentleman could reconcile it to himself not to propose some permanent measure to relieve the distress of the country, when the chief article of food there was in a state of decay, and when the effect of the taint would be felt for years to come; for the Hon. Member for Lincolnshire had said that he believed such would be the effect. He thought the Right Hon. Gentleman would have done well to have considered what expedient it were wise to pursue to prevent so great an evil. He ought not to have been content with saying "no" to the measure of the Government; but to have pointed out what other course it was proper to take to guard against a similar evil. As he upon a former occasion had an opportunity of addressing the House upon the question then before them, he should not at present enter into any further explanations. Seeing the danger which threatened the country, and considering that that danger was not likely to impend for a short, but rather for a considerable period, it did appear to him that nothing should be allowed to interfere with the food of the people; and, believing that a freer admission of food than they had hitherto enjoyed was not only necessary for their prosperity, but for their existence, he felt no hesitation in giving his concurrence to the measure then under the consideration of the House, however much opposed that measure might be to the opinions which he formerly entertained and expressed; and he should feel that he incurred a deep responsibility if he had taken any other course. He should feel that he incurred a very weighty responsibility indeed, if he allowed the desire of preserving political consistency to interfere for a single moment with a measure which he deemed essential to the subsistence of the people (hear, hear).

The EARL OF MARCH complained, that the remarks of the Right

Hon. Gentleman who last addressed the House were most unjust as regarded him, and those who thought with him. If he and his friends had declared that they should oppose an extraordinary measure by extraordinary means, he confessed that he did not see how they could be justly censured for that. England had been under the influence of successive Corn Bills for more than 500 years; and he hoped they would not give up for a vain theory a system under which they had so long been prosperous. He was justified in calling it a vain theory, and he could refer them to the speeches of the present Secretary for the Colonies, especially those delivered by him in 1842, in the course of which that Right Hon. Gentleman said it was of great practical importance that a reasonable protection should be given to the agricultural interests of the country. Again, the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government told them in 1842, that though it was necessary that they should, to some extent, be dependent upon foreign supplies, yet they ought not to permit themselves to be wholly in their power—they should not permit themselves to be exposed to the hostility or the caprice of any foreign Government, or to the chances of the crops failing in any part of the world. If that doctrine was good in 1842, it was equally so at the present moment. He regretted to find that the question of the Corn Laws was often argued as if it were a landlord's question, but he conceived it to be one which equally interested the labourer, the yeoman, the mechanic, and the tradesman. He protested against placing in jeopardy not only the owners and occupiers of land, but also the agricultural labourers, the shopkeepers in the rural districts, and the manufacturers who supplied our colonies or the home market. It was his duty, therefore, to the respectable constituents who had sent him to that House to oppose a measure which would create a panic, and which departed from safe, sound, and deliberate legislation (hear, hear).

MR. FINCH moved that the debate be adjourned till Thursday, which was put and agreed to.

#### THURSDAY, MARCH 26.

MR. FINCH said that it was unfair to ask a party not invested with power what course they, as Protectionists, would take if in office; but he would say that the principle they would maintain would be the good old English principle of Protection, under which the country had hitherto flourished. Whether that should be by a fixed duty or a sliding scale would not lead to any great difference of opinion. Nothing could be more constitutional, however, than to reject a measure containing such sweeping changes as the present, and to force an appeal to the country. The measure, indeed, involved a fivefold revolution. A social revolution, because the effect of Free Trade would be to do away with the Poor Laws; a commercial revolution, because it would take away what had hitherto been the bond of union between the mother country and the colonies; a financial revolution, because it would shake public credit, and, by laying the public burdens on the rich, dry up the sources of industry; and a political revolution in a double aspect, because it would transfer the pre-eminence to the manufacturing

classes, and favour democracy by making the Crown more dependent on the will of the favoured portion of the community. A Minister who proposed such changes incurred great responsibility (hear, hear); and if he consulted his own permanent interest, he would desire to devolve a small portion of that responsibility on the shoulders of the people. The interests affected were far more numerous than were at first sight supposed. According to Mr. M'Culloch there were 200,000 owners of land in England and Wales, and 150,000 tenant-farmers. Taking each family at three persons, this would give 1,000,000 persons. The agricultural labourers with their wives and families were 4,000,000, and those in villages occupied in trades dependent upon the agriculturists were 2,600,000; so that there were 7,000,000 engaged in, or dependent on, agriculture, or one-half of the whole population; and taking the capital employed, if there were a depreciation of twenty per cent., the annual loss to those agriculturists would be £5,000,000. No reliance could be placed on the prognostications of the Right Hon. Baronet. The bullion and the Roman Catholic questions had shown his mutability, and the results had falsified his predictions. His last proposal seemed to have great favour with him; but orators, as well as writers, were apt to misjudge the relative value of their own works. The more consideration he gave to the bill, the more strong was his conviction that it was the most pernicious measure ever submitted to the British Parliament. He hoped the Protectionists, both in and out of that House, would persevere, and nail the colours of Protection to the mast, and that, if they did fall, they would fall as honest and patriotic men ought to do, at the post of duty.

LORD RENDLESHAM contended that the Right Hon. Baronet ought to have afforded the constituencies of the country an opportunity of expressing their opinion on this subject. After reading a long letter addressed by Mr. Huskisson to his constituents in 1814, in favour of the protective system established by the Corn Law of 1815, the Noble Lord proceeded to contend that as, in the agricultural districts, the rate of wages was regulated by the price of corn, the present measure would have a most injurious effect upon the labouring population. The light land which had been brought into cultivation under a system of remunerative prices must also be converted into pasturo land. He might mention that at a recent meeting of tenant-farmers in an agricultural district, they were so much dissatisfied with the proceedings of the House, and with the manner in which their interests were represented, that they expressed their determination, at the next election, to bring forward a tenant-farmer as their representative.

MR. FELLOWES said he was returned to Parliament to support the principle of Protection, and he had not heard anything which had induced him to change his opinion. Certainly, if he had seen reason to abandon those principles he should have felt it his duty to resign into the hands of his constituents the trust they had committed to him. The present Ministers must not imagine that the question was now settled. An appeal must be made to the people in the course of time, and then the people would express their

opinion in plain terms. He believed that the country would rather have a Government radically disposed, checked by a strong Conservative party, than a Government saying one thing to-day and doing another to-morrow.

MR. FULLER believed that the security of all property would be injured by the measures proposed; and if they were carried, England would be reduced to the condition of Ireland, and there would be no safety for life or property.

MR. BORTHWICK observed, that the Hon. Member for Lambeth (Mr. Hawes) had urged on the other night that the period from 1787 to 1792, during which the variation in the price of wheat never exceeded 7s., proved the advantage of Free Trade in corn in producing a steady price. But, in fact, those years were an argument for Protection; they were not years of Free Trade, either practical or theoretical, but of protected trade, there being a duty on imports and a bounty on exports. He felt it his duty to vote against the measure, not from any wish to see a new party in the state, but because he thought the measure would be most seriously injurious to the country.

MR. C. BULLER assured the Hon. Member for Evesham that he was not one of those who complained of Hon. Gentlemen following the wisdom of their ancestors; what he complained of was, that they did not follow their "wisdom;" but selected the most unwise things our ancestors did as the ground of their policy, to the neglect really of the landmarks of true wisdom which they had left us. He thought that Hon. Gentlemen below the gangway, in blaming Ministers for their inconsistency on this question, threw blame on their own want of perception, for he was sure there were abundant indications in all the debates year after year, that the convictions of the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) on the subject of the Corn Laws were undergoing a great alteration; he yielded one argument after another, till it became a general remark on that (the Opposition) side of the House—"Upon what will the Corn Laws be left standing?" (hear, hear). The fact was, that for the last few years they stood upon nothing more secure than the annual promise which the Duke of Richmond extorted from Ministers that they would not be altered that year. With the convictions of the Right Hon. Gentleman, then, weakening in favour of the Corn Laws, how did circumstances operate in the autumn of last year? Some Gentlemen opposite laughed at the arguments which had been drawn from the Irish famine, and said that it afforded no justification of the change whatever. Now, here he must say that he thought Hon. Gentlemen opposite had shown some of that inconsistency with which they were so ready to reproach others; for they had not remained of the same mind with reference to the deficiency in Ireland during the course of these debates. There was nothing more marked than the tone of those Gentlemen on this subject in the first debate: they readily admitted the distress in Ireland, and held that Ministers were bound to provide for it by the opening of the ports; and it was not until they found that this admission had completely cut away their other arguments from under their feet that they bethought themselves of bringing forward Gentlemen to deny the existence of the famine

(hear, hear). It was admitted pretty generally that the potato disease would, it was more than likely, affect the next year's crop as well as the present. Well, the Government with that fear before them, must, if they opened the ports to meet the existing emergency, have felt the probability of their being obliged again to open them next year. It would have been impossible for them to have withstood the increasing force of public opinion, thus accelerated by their own acts. The course which the Right Hon. Baronet had pursued in the face of so much obloquy was the course of a truly wise statesman. Never had he shown a more sagacious insight into the true Conservative policy than when he proposed to Repeal the Corn Laws, which had been the cause of so much heart-burning among the people of this country (cheers).

LORD G. BENTINCK was surprised that the Hon. Gentleman, when he looked to Prussia, France, and the United States, could say the united sense of all mankind was in favour of Free Trade. As well might he mistake the three tailors of Tooley-street for the people of England. It had been proved that the famine in Ireland was a gross delusion (cheers from the Protection benches). When it was mentioned in the Queen's speech, the House was disposed to listen to so high an authority. They had since had opportunities for inquiry; and the result of the returns laid before them from 414 market-towns in Ireland was, that the average price of potatoes there was a fraction under 4d. a-stone. Such being the case, Hon. Gentlemen would not persuade the people of England that there was a potato famine in Ireland. The returns referred to were dated the 24th of January, and since then the price of potatoes had been falling rather than rising. He held in his hand, as further refutation of statements advanced, returns of the price of potatoes in nineteen market-towns in Ireland during the present month, up to the 24th instant; from these he found that in four towns the price had risen; in five it had fallen; and in the remaining localities the price was exactly the same as on the 24th of January. And when they found, as they did find, that, notwithstanding the low price in England, potatoes were still exported, with a profit, from Ireland, were they not justified in believing and in stating that there never had been a more gross delusion than that which had been encouraged by the Government? (cheers). With great difficulty he had succeeded, on another evening, in pressing the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) to a confession that it was his opinion, that if Free Trade in Corn had existed in the year 1836, when, as the Right Honourable Baronet had stated, the average price of wheat was 35s., the effect would not have been to create a still greater reduction in the price (hear, hear). Now, in the year 1836, he (Lord G. Bentinck) had found that wheat could have been imported, taking the average prices in the markets of ten different countries in Europe, and brought into Mark-lane at 32s. 11½d., and the average price in England of English wheat being, not, as was stated, 35s., but 46s., it was consequently clear that foreign wheat could have been sold at 13s. cheaper than the home produce. And the London prices being 3s. higher than elsewhere in the country, was the assertion of the Right Hon. Baronet borne out by the fact? (hear). In 1835 the

price of corn, they had from the same authority, was 39s. ; and he (Lord G. Bentinck) saw from the result of a similar calculation that wheat could have been imported from abroad at an average of 29s. 10½d. ; that was 10s. lower than the lowest price of wheat ever known in this country (hear, hear). Was not this an equally impressive refutation of the opinion advanced by the Right Hon. Baronet as to the effect which, in that year, a Free Trade in Corn would have had upon the agricultural interest? (cheers). The Right Hon. Gentleman had held out to the Protectionists that the price of corn would rather be enhanced by Free Trade, while he told the Free Traders that his object was to procure cheap bread for the people. As he would express no opinion as to the probable future operation of his measure, he thought they (the Protectionists) were entitled to ask him to return to his former opinions. It had been argued that Free Trade was necessary to secure steadiness in the price of corn, and that the sliding scale caused great fluctuations. He was ready to meet Hon. Gentlemen on both those points. They had not abandoned the sliding scale (hear, hear); he believed a large portion of the agricultural body were persuaded that the sliding scale of 1842 had worked better than any other Corn Law (hear, hear). Under it the fluctuations had only been from 45s. to 60s. in the course of nearly four years. From 1835 to 1839 the fluctuation of price in foreign countries had been in Dantsie 202 per cent., in Hamburg 192 per cent., in Amsterdam 204 per cent., in Antwerp 269 per cent., in Bordeaux 81 per cent., in Memel 166 per cent., and in Odessa 106 per cent. If they depended on the foreign supply of corn, they would be subject to the same fluctuations. The Right Hon. Gentleman said he could not keep a duty of 17s. a quarter in the face of a famine in Ireland. But he could show that this duty could be paid by the importers from all foreign countries. There were 600,000 quarters of corn in bond on the 31st of October. Then came a report of an alteration in the Corn Laws, and speculations of the Free Traders followed. He held a list of the real invoice prices of corn at foreign ports, and he found that a cargo of wheat at Rostock had been put on board a foreign ship—he was sorry to say that these were all foreign ships (hear)—consisting of 1,404 quarters, free to London, at 26s. 6d. per quarter; the charges and the duty of 18s. made the price at Mark-lane at 50s. 8d. Now, the price of Mecklenburgh wheat in Mark-lane this time was from 61s. to 64s. per quarter, so that there was a profit of 12s. per quarter. Again, a cargo of wheat had been shipped from Stettin in July last year, which after paying the duty, yielded a clear profit of 13s. a quarter. He had, therefore, shown that with the duty of 18s., notwithstanding the scanty harvests abroad, a large quantity of foreign wheat could be imported into this country at a great profit. But with regard to the condition of the people, as affected by the high price of corn, it had been stated by a gentleman opposite that the wages of labourers were now 6s. a-week. Now, he found that in 37 counties of England the average wages during the war were 14s. 6d. a-week. Supposing, then, that the price of wheat was 100s. per quarter, the labourer would have 6s. 6d. to meet a difference of 68s., and he would be better off than at 6s. a-week, with wheat at

32s. The Right Hon. Gentleman the Member for Portsmouth (Mr. F. Baring) had called on them (the Protectionists) to state, as a great party, on the point as he thought of coming to power, the policy they intended to follow. He said that they had abandoned the principle of the sliding scale by their readiness to open the ports as regarded Ireland. He (Lord G. Bentinck) begged to say that they had not done so as regarded the port of London. He had argued in the first debate, *usque ad nauseam*, that there was no just ground for opening the ports of Ireland, and he had thought he had argued with success that the opening of their ports would be no relief to the people of Ireland; that they should have sent the £100,000 to Ireland to buy other food than potatoes for the Irish people, instead of sending it to the United States of America to assist them in arming their seaboard (hear, hear). When the Right Hon. Baronet proposed to open the ports in December, only three of his Colleagues concurred with him, and the Duke of Wellington, the shrewdest man amongst them, had stated that, though there might be a short potato crop, it could not be said that there was any deficiency in Ireland, and if there had been a famine, the ports would open of themselves. He could not forget that he had more than once been called upon to state what course he should pursue if left to his own judgment, and what policy he should advise the House to adopt with reference to the Corn Laws. To that he was prepared to give a comprehensive answer. Recollecting how the Ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer had opposed any alteration of the Corn Laws, and recollecting how he (Lord G. Bentinck) had supported him in that resistance to change down to the year 1838, recollecting that even in 1841 that Right Hon. Gentleman supported an 8s. duty, and recollecting that in the latter end of 1845, his Noble Friend the Member for London sought to outbid the Right Hon. Baronet as a candidate for office, and hearing it declared, as it had been on the other side the House, that nothing but Free Trade would save the country, he was compelled to say that he could not act with such statesmen; and if he were asked what advice he should on his own behalf and that of his friends offer to the House, he should say, as he before had said, that that advice would be very comprehensive. He should, adopting the language of Dr. Baillie, tell them to take no more remedies compounded at the other side of the House (hear, hear). He gave that advice deliberately, because he felt and knew that, placed as he and his friends were, they ought to be cautious as to what principles they committed themselves. Where they were charged with setting one class against another, they ought to weigh well the course that they took. They ought to remember that a question respecting the supply of cheap bread and the Protection of native industry, was a question of the most exciting nature; they should recollect the description given of their opponents on the other side, when they dissolved the Parliament upon this question in the year 1841, when they were spoken of as desperate tenants under notice to quit. But what did the Gentlemen who sat on the Treasury bench think of themselves now? They had pirated the doctrines, the measures, and even the old speeches of the Anti-Corn Law League. But unfortunately, with many of the qualities of the pirate,

they did not possess the daring spirit which characterised that class. They were not of that order of men who would fire the magazine and cover themselves with ruin, rather than capitulate and be covered with disgrace (hear, hear). They did not stand by the good ship — they steered her upon a lee-shore, they cast her upon the breakers, they brought her under the guns of the enemy's battery, and, whilst the crew were asleep in their hammocks, scuttled the ship; the captain, lieutenant, the master, and the mate, slunk disgracefully away, leaving the gallant crew an easy prey to those to whom they had betrayed both ship and men. They judged of the mettle of the crew by their own craven hearts; and, though that crew might for the moment be in confusion, they were still not discouraged; the crew had rallied from the temporary shock; they hoped to steer away from the lee-shore, and eventually to bring the ship into port (hear, hear).

SIR J. GRAHAM said, that at an early period of the debate he had risen to address the House, and would then have gladly offered some observations, which he would then have been enabled to do; but now he thought it would on the whole be convenient to the House, and certainly it would be to himself, if he did not at that time proceed (cheers). He therefore hoped the House would permit him to move the adjournment of the debate.

The adjournment was then put and carried.

#### FRIDAY, MARCH 27.

The adjourned debate was resumed by

SIR J. GRAHAM, who said—I am very unwilling to prolong, needlessly, a debate which has been thus protracted, and which, I believe, the public at large are most desirous to see concluded by some decision, be that decision what it may. But, having failed in the course of yesterday evening to obtain that opportunity of addressing you which I was desirous of obtaining, I do not think it would be proper that this discussion should be adjourned without my adverting to some of the observations and arguments made and adduced during this debate. I will at once proceed to advert to the speech of the Noble Lord the Member for Lynn (Lord G. Bentinck). It appeared to me, when stripped of the metaphor which accompanied it, to consist almost entirely of that personal and violent invective which, I regret to say, marked the greater portion of the speeches delivered on this side of the House against the measures of Her Majesty's Government. Now, having plainly avowed a great change in my own opinion on this subject, I should not be guilty of commenting with anything like irony on the maintenance, on the part of Hon. Gentlemen sitting on this side of the House, of the opinions which at one time I sincerely, in common with them, entertained, and which, up to a late period, I advocated. Neither will I say that I am not deeply grieved by the expression of the loss of esteem on the part of Hon. Members with whom I have acted for so many years, and in whose support and friendship, under trying circumstances, I have often rejoiced (cheers). When I made up my mind, from a deep sense of public duty, and upon consideration of a pressing public necessity, to present these measures to Parliament, I did anticipate,

I foresaw with pain, all and everything that has taken place on this occasion with reference to the conduct of my Hon. Friends on this side of the House. But the necessity demanded the sacrifice, and I made it (cheers). Now, the great argument against our restricted Corn Law was, that whilst there was an unsteadiness in its operation in varying times and varying seasons, the demand was most unequal and uncertain, and it is quite clear that the price of wheat on the continent of Europe mainly depends on the demand in the British market. The price in 1835 and 1836 being unusually low in England, the effect on the continent was this—a glut was produced in the foreign markets, from which our supplies were usually drawn, and the price there also was consequently low; and the Noble Lord under these circumstances draws the inference that wheat might then have been imported at a price of something like 30s. a quarter. I leave it to the House to say whether it is a safe inference that, *in communibus annis*, such would be the case. A great argument in favour of a steady annual demand on the continent of Europe, our supply being deficient, is this—that while, in this country, from our increasing population, there is an increasing difficulty in finding an adequate home supply, the demand from abroad is annually increasing, and the result will be not so much to lower in this country as to raise the prices on the continent, thereby equalizing the prices here and abroad, and effecting this great object,—securing the people of England in years of deficiency against a sudden and extravagant rise in price (hear, hear). Their commercial rivals will, at the same time, not only have an extended trade with England, by means of an exchange of commodities, but steady prices and a guarantee against any ruinous fluctuation. What had been the fact in the years 1835 and 1836 was therefore no groundwork for estimating the prices then as the uniform prices at which wheat could be imported into this country. It is only a demonstration of the uncertainty of the demand here and the effects of that uncertainty abroad. The Noble Lord then proceeded to argue with reference to steadiness of prices, and he produced a table which I think remarkably illustrates another great effect which, as has been pointed out by the enemies of the sliding scale, is inherent in the present system of Corn Laws. That table demonstrates more clearly than I have ever yet seen it shown, that the great fluctuation in prices on the continent depends on the demand from England. The table of fluctuations he brings forward shows, unequivocally, that exactly in proportion to the proximity to England, and the uncertain demand in England for wheat, has been the fluctuation in foreign corn. The table of fluctuations in the markets of Antwerp, Amsterdam, Dantzic, Hamburgh, and Odessa, which are the ports from which we draw the required supplies, almost wholly prove the case; and to complete the demonstration, the Noble Lord dwelt upon the fact that in Bordeaux the fluctuation was least. Now, it is notorious that we have no trade whatever in corn with France. Is not the inference to be deduced from this as I have stated? (hear, hear). And what is the consequence of this? We convert our natural, our best customers, not only into commercial rivals, but into enemies. When they have abundance their markets are glutted, and they find ruinously low

prices; and under other circumstances the uncertainties of the corn trade are such that they come to the conclusion that they can place no reliance on it. They then form hostile tariffs; they impose high duties on our manufactures, and they relinquish our corn trade in despair, as not only not producing to them good, but as inconsistent with their national safety. I say again that our Corn Law legislation has solely tended to create these fluctuations in the foreign markets, and that has always appeared to me the strongest reason why the system should be altered (cheers). The Noble Lord then proceeds to comment on what he terms the evenness of prices in England since the passing of the law in 1842. I have already stated to the House that that very evenness of prices in the present year appears to me delusive. It is well known that in no one year, in the memory of the oldest farmer, was there such inequality with respect to the quantity of corn as in the present year (cheers). I do not exaggerate when I say that the price of wheat last year varies from 48s. to 72s., and, knowing that this variation in our markets was on account of the slow and imperfect operation of the sliding scale in a great national emergency, I for one was distinctly persuaded that an alteration in the system was called for (cheers). I am told by a Noble Lord that there is a farm within 30 miles of his property, without a residence, and not in a very good condition, the rental being £650, and under the circumstances of its position and its proximity to a railroad, it was supposed there would be an increase in its value, and he had been advised to ask 32 years' purchase for the farm. For five years he never had any offer to purchase, but within the last three weeks an offer has been made, coming up to the full demand, and it is expected that the bargain will be struck. Then will any land be thrown out of cultivation? It is very difficult to ascertain this point; but there is a fact which goes beyond all speculation. If it is probable that land will be thrown out of cultivation, no man out of Bedlam would go and purchase land. Is the House aware of the working of the Enclosure Commission? Last year, in the early part of it, there were few applications for enclosures, and to a small extent. Now I will read to the House what have been the applications to the Enclosure Commissioners, for the last six months; and I repeat that no man in his senses could make an application to enclose land, if land was expected to be thrown out of cultivation. Now, in September last, the applications were for 2,290 acres, and in October the number of acres was 4,588. That was under Protection, and at that time there was no idea of any alteration in the Corn Laws. But, in November, there was pregnant evidence in many quarters that a proposition would be made to Parliament for a material alteration in those laws. Did that circumstance check applications to the Commissioners of Enclosure? I have stated that the number of applications in Oct., were for 4,588 acres; in November, they were 7,847; in December, 7,205; in January, 5,600; in February, 3,505 ("hear," from the Protectionists). In March, down to the 7th of the month, that is, within the last fortnight, applications have been made to enclose no less than 16,500 acres (hear). So much for land being thrown out of cultivation. Then, Sir, the Hon. Member for the University of Oxford, stated

his opinion, that this measure was inconsistent with the interests of the-tithe owners. Nothing could be more accurate than the statement which the Hon. Member made, that under the Commutation Act, that tithe is an invariable quantity, though the price is variable. In my opinion, the very accuracy of the statement disposes of the question so far as the tithe-owners are concerned. Under the Tithe Commutation Act an invariable quantity is secured, whatever may be the change of cultivation, the only variation is in the price. Now, observe; before the Tithe Commutation Act, the tithe-owner was not only exposed to a variation of price—because if he took his tithe in kind, he was liable to the variation of price—but also to a great variation in quantity; whilst under the Tithe Commutation Act, he is free from that variation in quantity to which he was before exposed, and he is liable only to that variation of price from which he was not before exempt (hear, hear). That is my answer to the objection of the Hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Oxford. I will now refer to the damage likely to arise to agriculture, and I must here say that the prosperity of the home trade has been almost invariably concurrent with the improvement of the land, with the prosperity of agriculture, and speaking generally, with the reduced price of food. In the neighbourhood of the manufacturing towns the importation from distant places has received a great and a progressive increase. Manchester and Liverpool now draw their supplies of agricultural produce from Ireland, from Scotland, and from the northern counties of England; and simultaneously with that increased importation of produce from a distance, there is an increased price in the neighbourhood of the towns; and so far from its being a consequence that the value of land in the neighbourhood of the towns should fall, the very reverse is the fact. And now, Sir, I come to the consideration which I own operates most powerfully on my judgment, I cannot overlook the fact, that the Government of this country is, in practice, vested mainly in the land-owners. The other House of Parliament is composed almost exclusively of landowners; and there is in this House a great preponderance of the landed interest (hear, hear). A Government so based and so conducted cannot long maintain any influence in opposition to the great body of public opinion; such a Government to be safe, must make it evident to all that its rule has been impartial legislation (hear, hear); and now, when we consider the concentration, the union, the intelligence, the growing numbers, and the increasing proportion of the manufacturing population, who have, if not an universal, a very general opinion deeply seated in their mind, that the Corn Laws do enhance the price of bread, and do at the same time lower wages—that they make the manufacturing workmen pay more and receive less. If you persist in maintaining such laws, you may depend upon it that the population will not place confidence in the impartiality of your legislation. The people, upon this point of their daily food, will not at all times listen to reason; they cannot be cajoled by fallacies, and I am satisfied, in my own judgment, that they are not wrong in their opinion. They are right in their opinion, that with the manufacturing population of this country high prices are concurrent with low wages, and

they are placed in a most unfair position when the price of bread is artificially enhanced, and at the same time the means of obtaining it are decreased (cheers). If, Sir, time would permit, I could give you conclusive evidence, which I have before me, that this opinion is no longer confined to the manufacturing population. I could show that the agricultural population are beginning to be of the same opinion (hear, hear). I could produce evidence to show that there is a diminution of crime when prices fall, and that there is an increase of crime when prices rise. I can show that distemper and mortality also increase in proportion to the rise in the price of food, and that they decrease as the price of food diminishes. It has been already proved that though the wages in agricultural districts do to a certain extent rise with the price of corn, they never rise in the same proportion as the price of food (hear, hear). I have shown, then, the unanswerable opinion of the manufacturing population. I have said that the same opinions prevail in many districts among the agricultural and rural population. I am bound to say that I cannot declare the conclusions drawn by the manufacturing population to be unsound and untrue; and believing them to be sound and true, and that it would be dangerous to the permanent domestic peace of the country, and that it would not be safe to resist all consideration for this opinion, I shall give my hearty and unhesitating support to the bill now before the House (cheers). But I think it necessary, perhaps, that I should say, with reference to our domestic peace, there is no time to be lost (hear, hear), and that with reference to our foreign relations the measure and the time are decidedly politic. Nations trading with each other are bound over in heavy responsibilities to keep the peace. Governments may be prone to war, but if commerce be free, and if there be extended ramifications promoting the social enjoyment of each, they will consider their common good; and whatever may be the disposition of Governments to war, a people whose daily comforts are ministered to by other nations will be the friends of peace; and thus the peace of the world will be best preserved, when commerce shall extend her benefits to the great body of the people (hear, hear). The Hon. Gentleman who moved the present amendment made a quotation from a modern poet, and then sat down. I will follow his example, of ending with a quotation, and though mine will not be exactly from a modern poet, still it will meet the tone and the spirit in which this measure is proposed. In Pope's *Windsor Forest* there are some lines so beautiful and so appropriate to the subject of this freedom of trade, and so real a description of the measure we propose, that I may be excused for quoting them. Looking forward as he then did to the happy days when London should be a free port, he apostrophises that noble river, the Thames, which is the channel to bring to this metropolis the commerce of the world, in these words:—

“ The time shall come when, free as seas or wind,  
 “ Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind;  
 “ Whole nations enter with each swelling tide,  
 “ And seas but join the regions they divide;  
 “ Earth's distant ends our glory shall behold,  
 “ And the new world launch forth to meet the old.”

(loud cheers.) That is a real description of the measure which we

are now discussing; and I say again, let that vision be realized, as I am convinced it will be, by giving a second reading to this bill (loud cheers).

MR. STUART said that he not only gave all credit to the Government for the reasons which induced them to propose this measure, but that he had been ready to listen to whatever could be said in its favour. Now, the Right Hon. Baronet had, in the latter part of his speech, expressed opinions which he (Mr Stuart) had heard not only with sorrow but with great alarm. The Right Hon. Gentleman's argument was, that the time had come when the people were aware that the landed interest had an undue preponderance in that House.

SIR J. GRAHAM. - I did not say "undue."

MR. STUART—Well, not an undue, but a preponderating influence; then, if that existed in that House, what had become of the Reform Bill? (hear, hear). He had listened with the greatest attention to the speech which the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had addressed to the House because he wished to hear what were the strongest arguments that could be brought forward in favour of this measure; but he had heard nothing like the opinion expressed by the Right Hon. Gentleman the Secretary for the Home Department with the view of coercing their opinions (hear),—that they were not to look at the measure whether it was right or not, but at public opinion,—at the growing opinions of the manufacturing interest. A more revolutionary doctrine there could not be (hear, hear). He was but a very humble individual, but, with a great body of the sound and sensible part of the community, he entertained the opinion that that House did fairly and properly represent the whole people of Great Britain, of the manufacturing as well as of the landed interests. It was indeed a monstrous doctrine to say that they were to be guided not by their own opinion, but by the manufacturing interests (hear, hear). Now, he intended to vote against this measure. Anxious as he might be to support any measure that was brought forward with the sanction of the Government, still, as an honest man, he felt bound to vote against the present. Until he had heard the astounding opinion of the Right Hon. Baronet expressed that evening, he had thought that all sound and practical statesmen were agreed that the landed interests of this country were the basis of all its prosperity (hear, hear); and even the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government admitted that protection was to be removed, not because it is wrong in principle, but because a great necessity had arisen. But, if that were so, he called upon the Government to remedy those temporary evils by measures of a speedier and better kind. He considered that a Government which came down to support this measure by threats of a change of opinion in the manufacturing body—an assertion which was founded upon very imperfect evidence—must be, indeed, as it had been called, a falling Government, and ought not to last for a day (hear, hear). A Government which attempted to influence the votes of independent Members of that House, by motives of terror, founded on the ebullitions of public opinion at meetings, or in newspapers, would, in his opinion, reduce the Legislature to the lowest state of degradation and corruption.

It was the duty of the Government to prevent the Legislature from being overawed by the expression of mob opinion, which might be excited by the appeals of Members of that House to assemblies of fustian jackets. If a mob of the working classes should again congregate in Lincoln's-inn-fields, in order to overawe the House, and influence its decisions, it would be the duty of the Government to interfere; and a Government which was incapable of preserving them from that species of intimidation ought no longer to exist. The Right Hon. Home Secretary (Sir J. Graham), in advising them to legislate on the opinions of the House, and to cast aside the records of *Hansard*, only repeated the advice given by Jack Cade, to his followers,—“Henceforth let all the records of Parliament be destroyed, and receive the laws from my mouth” (hear, hear).

MR. BOUVERIE said the Hon. Member who had just sat down had seemed indignant, because he (Mr. Bouverie) smiled when the Hon. Gentleman said that the existence of manufactures and commerce depended upon the agriculture of this country; and that if our commerce and manufactures were destroyed agriculture would still continue to flourish. He remembered some lines in a work published a few years ago by the Noble Lord the Member for Newark (Lord J. Manners)—

“Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning die,  
“But leave us still our old nobility;”

which, with a very slight alteration, would most appositely express the views of the Hon. Gentleman:—

“Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning die,  
“But leave us still our own fertility.”

He (Mr. Bouverie) apprehended, if we had had nothing but that fertility to depend upon, if the commerce and manufactures of the country, which, during the last half century, had trebled the value of the land, had never existed, the Hon. Gentleman would not have sought a place in that House, but would have continued in the profession of the law, and might have been in the condition of one of those Picts of whom we read in ancient history. The Honourable Gentleman seemed very slow to believe any facts which did not suit his own purpose. He (Mr. Stuart) had stated that the manufacturing classes were not favourable to a repeal of the Corn Law. He (Mr. Bouverie) wondered, as that was the opinion of the Honourable Gentleman, that, when he desired a seat in that House, he had not presented himself to a great manufacturing constituency, instead of relying on the support of a constituency over whom the landed interest maintained an unfair and unconstitutional influence with regard to the return of Members. The Hon. Member for Newark had entirely lost sight of the main question at issue—whether this law was one which the House ought to repeal or to maintain? In arguing this question, Hon. Gentlemen opposite had assumed—as he (Mr. Bouverie) considered without just grounds—that the protective laws had produced that advantage and prosperity to the landed interest which was undoubtedly their object. He maintained this had not been the case. Let the House recollect that it was not in a time of plenty and abundance that the Chartist insurrection took place; but it was

at a period when the Corn Laws operated to increase scarcity, and when, in consequence, the people were suffering from want of employment. And when did peace and contentment re-appear? It was when Providence, more bountiful than the laws, blessed the country with a good harvest; and the people were enabled, by their honest industry, to earn a livelihood (hear, hear). Therefore all those who, like the landowners, were interested in the maintenance of peace and order, should be desirous of seeing a law like the present removed from the statute-book. He feared that a great number of the Hon. Gentlemen opposite were unable to appreciate the statesmanlike views of the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, but he believed that the country would do justice to his motives. He believed that many of the Hon. Gentlemen opposite, even when they supported the Right Hon. Baronet, had only accepted him as a necessity, and that their support of him was not a result of their love but of their fear. The Right Honourable Baronet had the wisdom to foresee the ignominy and disgrace which would befall that party by continuing in their old policy, and struggling with the intelligence of the country. The Right Hon. Baronet wished to save them from the disgrace of defeat, and offered them a fair and honourable retreat, and on themselves would lie the responsibility of rejecting that offer (hear, hear).

THE MARQUIS OF WORCESTER maintained that the Hon. Member for Newark was perfectly justified in referring to the statements relative to the potato rot in Ireland, as that subject had been brought forward by Her Majesty's Ministers themselves. He and his Hon. Friends about him would be most happy to vote a supply for the relief of Ireland, but they had no proofs yet given them that there was more distress in Ireland at the present moment than ordinarily. In reference to what had fallen from the Hon. Member for Liskeard, he would observe that he had heard it whispered that that Hon. Gentleman's constituents were not so strongly in favour of Free Trade as he could wish the House to believe (hear, hear). He believed that the effect of the measure proposed by the Government would be to reduce many tenant-farmers to the scale of labourers, and to drive many labourers either to emigration or to the workhouse. One reason why the Right Hon. Baronet should have been careful in giving way to the Anti-Corn Law League was, because it was not at all probable, after these measures were carried, that the League would disperse, or that they would not immediately commence another agitation for something else (hear, hear). The agitation would go on, and be directed against the Church of England, and against every branch of our constitution (hear).

MR. D. GARDNER said, he was returned as a friend to Protection, and not to Free Trade, and his constituents would wish him to state the reasons of his opinion and vote. The Government had laid no sufficient ground for the present measure. The effect of the measure now under discussion must be that the prices of grain would be lower, and remain steady at a lower amount; and hence the rents of landed property must be lowered. There ought to have been measures of compensation such as relief from burdens on land, introduced at the same time with this bill. The Right Hon. the Home Secretary had

talked of a farm being recently let at an increased rent in the Isle of Ely, but he did not state in what part of it; if it was in the Bedford Level, that land had been greatly improved, and, indeed, the fen land generally was rising in value through improvements; such an instance proved nothing. If we were to have Free Trade with all foreign nations, so must our colonies have; India would claim the repeal of the 20 per cent. import duty laid on foreign goods brought there, for the protection of the British colonial trade. But, then, what would become of our trade with our colonies? (hear). The Hon. Gentleman concluded by a reference to the great quantity of wheat which would be brought from America, as well as Indian corn, which he believed would come to have a most important bearing on agriculture in this country.

MR. MILD MAY rose to explain the reasons which induced him to oppose Her Majesty's Ministers on this question. On the first occasion when this subject was before the House, he did not appear either among the supporters or the opposers of the motion—not because he entertained a different opinion from that which he held now, but he paid deference to what he regarded as superior authorities, and did not think it right to oppose a measure introduced by Her Majesty's Ministers, and holding a prominent part in the speech addressed by Her Majesty herself to Parliament at the opening of the session (hear, hear). He therefore abstained from voting rather than be numbered among the supporters of a measure he totally disapproved of (hear). But now they were arrived at another stage of the question, and he would not from any feeling of that sort decline taking a straightforward path, either in support of or in opposition to this measure (hear, hear). And in forming his opinion as to the course he should pursue, he had felt the greatest reluctance in coming to the decision of placing himself among the opposers of those whom he had invariably supported, and to whom he gave every credit for sincerity in the change of opinion of which this measure was the evidence. The Hon. Gentleman concluded by declaring his intention to vote against the second reading of the bill.

SIR R. PEEL was unwilling to trouble the House with any statements of a personal nature. If he were a private individual, he would have allowed the various charges made against him—to which he had listened more in sorrow than in anger—to pass by unnoticed; but he was a Minister of the Crown, and therefore he must notice charges which he should otherwise have disregarded, from the consciousness that he had acted throughout on a sense of public duty, and on the purest and most conscientious motives; that he had abandoned no trust, and deserted no party. He had been told that he had made a sudden turn on the subject of the Corn Laws which surprised every one. He denied the charge. Last year, when Mr. Villiers brought forward his annual motion for the repeal of the Corn Laws, he had stated in his place in Parliament that he could not defend the Corn Laws on the grounds on which they were defended by many speakers, and that he was convinced that the same principle which governed our commercial policy must be applied to agriculture at no very distant period. He had been followed by Lord Howick, who expressed his opinion that if one or two para-

graphs were struck out of it, his (Sir R. Peel's) speech was an unanswerable argument in defence of the motion of Mr. Villiers. The Protection Society, in consequence of that speech, had also passed resolutions expressive of distrust in the agricultural policy of her Majesty's Government. He then stated the reasons which induced him to think early in November last that there must be a temporary suspension of the corn duties in consequence of the extent of the potato disease in Ireland, and that that suspension must of necessity lead to a final adjustment of the Corn Laws. Towards the end of November he had issued instructions to the authorities in Ireland respecting the mode in which they were to meet the famine and fever which he considered likely to occur in Ireland. But on issuing that instruction he foresaw that he must first suspend and ultimately repeal the Corn Laws. He had placed his opinions on that subject on record, by throwing them into the shape of a memorial which he had first read to the Cabinet, and had afterwards submitted to her Majesty. He then, by permission of her Majesty, read that memorial to the House. From that document it was apparent that he had always considered the final adjustment of the Corn Laws as a necessary consequence of their suspension, and that he had been prepared, if his colleagues had been unanimous, to have undertaken that task himself. He then adverted to the charge which Mr. Bankes had preferred against him of having pursued an unusual and unconstitutional course in venturing to advise her Majesty as to his successor in office. Unusual his course might have been—for the circumstances which called for it were also unusual; but unconstitutional it could not be, so long as a Privy Councillor had the same right as a Peer to ask an audience of her Majesty for the sake of explaining his opinions on the condition of the country. He then defended himself against the imputations which had been cast upon him for not dissolving the Parliament previously to submitting his new commercial policy to the consideration of the Legislature, and in the course of his observations remarked that nothing could be more democratic than the notion that Parliament was not competent to discuss any questions except those on which it had been specially instructed by the constituency. Turning from charges personal to himself, he next proceeded to examine the merits of the measure then specifically under the notice of the House. The question involved in it was simply this—was it advisable that the House should refuse to modify the Corn Laws to meet the distress prevailing in Ireland; or, having modified them, was it advisable that the House should not make an ultimate adjustment of them? Mr. Stuart had demanded whether he was prepared to ruin the agricultural interest. He attached the utmost importance to the prosperity of that interest. For great political reasons he thought the agricultural interest ought to have great political influence in this country. He should deplore the day, if ever it arrived, when the landed interest should be excluded in this country from its due share of influence and legislation. His firm conviction was, that the House would fortify the influence of the landed interest in this country by assenting to the arrangement he now proposed much more than by pertinaciously insisting on the maintenance of the privileges of the landed aristocracy. He

then entered into a general defence of the new tariff and the new Corn Law against the objections which had been preferred against both during the present discussion. He pointed out the enormous proportion of our population which subsisted on wages under 30s. a week. He showed that their expenditure for wheat in the shape of bread and flour amounted to more than one-half of their whole expenditure; and he asked whether anything would give greater encouragement to that population than the provision of a guarantee against the high price of wheat in future. Nobody could say that even with protection, the position of the agricultural labourer was such as could be wished, whilst the condition of the manufacturing population was such as to form a subject of the deepest interest to all who had hearts to feel and eyes to read the evidence collected by the Commission on the Health of Towns. Something must be done for the improvement of both; and the first element to promote their permanent social improvement was to provide an abundance of cheap food. He proved that even the agricultural labourer was not interested in the high price of wheat, inasmuch as the increase in the rate of wages was never in proportion to the increase in the price of corn. Looking at this measure as a whole, he was convinced that it would not be injurious to the agricultural interest, and that it would be conducive to the interest of all the rest of the community. He called upon the Protection party to consider how long they could maintain the existing laws. They might succeed for a time, but to maintain them permanently was impossible. He had been told that his days, as a Minister, were numbered. The more strongly this assertion was believed, the less reason was there for thinking that he had introduced this measure as a political manœuvre. Let this great national measure but pass into law, and they might then determine, as soon as they pleased, what course they would take to determine his political career. He deplored the loss of their confidence more than he did the loss of power. Every man, however, had in his own bosom the scales wherein to weigh the justice of the reproaches directed against him. Had they been just, one-tenth part of them would have been fatal to his existence, as a man and as a Minister. He concluded by declaring that when he did fall, he should have the satisfaction of knowing that he had not fallen because he had shown subserviency, or because he preferred the interests of party to the interests of his country. He should carry with him into his retirement the satisfaction that his object during his official career had been to mitigate monopoly, to increase the demand for industry, to remove the restrictions on commerce, to equalize taxation, and to ameliorate the social condition of those who labour.

MR. S. O'BRIEN said that, deep as was his respect for the House, and anxious as he was to consult its convenience, he trusted he should be allowed to make some remarks on what just fallen from the Right Hon. Baronet, and to vindicate the position which the Protection party occupied in the House. The Right Hon. Baronet had said, that if he fell he would have the consolation of reflecting that he had endeavoured to mitigate monopoly and to give greater freedom to trade; but he (Mr. O'Brien) thought that

skilful as the Right Hon. Baronet was in stating his own case, and anxious as he was to vindicate his character, he had not been so successful in his speech as he boasted of being in his measure ; for if he fell he would not only do so because he had endeavoured to mitigate what he called monopolies, but because if he went back beyond the last three years the tale would be totally different (hear). The Right Hon. Baronet had alluded to the Legislature of the country, and said that it had been mainly composed of interest in land. He (Mr. O'Brien) said, try them, not by an ideal standard, but let them take the state of this great empire and compare it with any other empire for an equal number of years, and if the change was to be from a landlord legislature to a commercial or manufacturing legislature, the issue they were about to try that night was indeed an important one. But the landed interest had a right to look them in the face, and say—"Take back if you choose the trust you gave us, but you must fairly own that we have not betrayed it" (hear, hear). The landed interest had been the main element in our legislation, and it had, among its other advantages, checked and elevated the mere spirit of barter. You owed to the landed interest far more than you were aware of, or than you were grateful for. Before you perilled such an interest as this you should at least show some good cause. You had proclaimed that you would not give the landed interest the same predominance that your fathers had done, and the result of which was the prosperity we now enjoyed. But though you were about to leave us—though as the Legislature you were inclined to leave the landed interest to struggle as they best could with strangers who might become enemies—though you were about to give your assent to the cold maxims of political economy, yet, when you found that buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market was not the way to render your people happy or the empire great, you would not be the less disposed to reconsider the decision pronounced to-night because there were some who loudly resisted it, and warned you of the dangers of the course in which you were about to embark (cheers).

LORD PALMERSTON rose amidst cries of "Divide, divide." The Noble Lord said, I will only detain the House for a short time, while I assist you in shaping and explaining the view which I understand gentlemen opposite to take of the two important questions which form the subject of our discussion this evening. The first of those questions is, as I understand it, commercial, the other is constitutional ; the former arising out of the measures of Her Majesty's Government, the other relating to their conduct in proposing them. The first question is as to the repeal of the Corn Law and the subject of protection ; the second is whether the Government are, or are not, justified in departing from certain engagements which it is alleged they have contracted with their party. That latter question is the less important of the two, but it is still deserving the consideration of the House and of the country ; for the political character of public men is public property, and that which concerns it must always be of public interest. The Government having introduced a measure this year not so much at variance with their former opinions

as with their practical course (hear, hear), a large section of their political supporters, not content with opposing the measure as injurious—not content with declaring that the Government have lost their confidence, and that they can no longer give them that support which they have hitherto afforded—charge the Government with having deserted and betrayed their followers (cheers from the Protection benches). Now, Sir, I cannot acquiesce in the constitutional doctrine which is implied in that charge. What does protection in the commercial sense mean? It means nothing but the injury of the many for the benefit of the few—with this difference, that the injury of the many is real, and the benefit to the few is, for the most part, delusive. There can be no benefit to any class of men unless they are stimulated to exert their industry, intelligence, and activity to the utmost extent; but protection is the baneful influence which paralyzes the vital energies of human industry, which cramps its powers and cripples its growth, and so far from benefiting the parties for whose advantage it is intended, it frequently leaves them in a worse condition than they would have been in had no protection been afforded them. I say then, Sir, that protection being injurious to the many, and not advantageous even to the few, it is contrary to one of the fundamental maxims which ought to guide legislation, namely, that you should legislate for the benefit of the many and not for the advantage of the few. But it is contended that though Free Trade and the absence of Protection may be very well in a country in a natural state of society, we are in an artificial condition;—that we have large naval and military establishments to support—a great debt, whose interest we ought to pay, and that we cannot afford to dispense with the principle of protection. I hold that to be a complete fallacy. I hold it to be not only untrue, but the very reverse of truth; for what is the effect of Protection? Why the meaning and effect of Protection is that you should, by artificial taxation, raise the price of commodities that come from abroad, and by that means raise the price of the like commodities at home; that you should make commodities dearer than they otherwise would be, and as I contend worse than they otherwise might be. Is our debt, or are our burdens, a reason why we should do that? If we are compelled to take from every man in the country a large portion of his income to supply the exigencies of the public service, is that a reason why, by artificial legislation, we should make everything which he wants to purchase with the remaining part of his income dearer than it otherwise would be? (hear, hear). On the contrary, if we are obliged to call on all classes to make a large sacrifice of income, whether derived from land, funds, professions, or labour, I say that is the strongest possible reason why we should endeavour to make the remainder which is left go as far as it possibly can in providing, according to each man's situation in life, the necessaries, conveniences, and luxuries which he may wish to enjoy (cheers). Are our relations with foreign countries a reason why this Protection should be maintained? Some Hon. Gentlemen say, "It is all very well; you may practise Free Trade yourselves, but other countries will not follow your example, and this one-handed Free Trade will not do; and that unless it is reciprocal and mutual, it will be a loss

to you and a benefit to other countries." I hold this to be just as great a fallacy as that which I have just exposed (hear, hear). What is the effect of mutual tariffs of Protection? Take any country—take France, for instance. The high tariffs of France and of England are mutually and reciprocally an injury to each other. Our high tariff is first an injury to ourselves, and next to the producer in France, and the high tariff in France is an injury to the French consumer as well as to the English producer (cheers). Is there any sense, then, in telling us that we are to submit to an inconvenience of which it is in our power to get rid, merely because another country chooses to subject itself and us to an inconvenience which is beyond our control? If we cannot get rid of both, let us get rid of one (cheers). This leads me to state that I have heard with great pleasure the announcement made by the Government that they at last feel that these negotiations for mutual tariffs of reciprocity are no longer worth pursuing (hear, hear); and that they have determined to adopt the bolder course of acting voluntarily on their own part (hear). Nevertheless I think that hitherto in carrying on these negotiations we have been right. It has been done in reference to the prejudices of this country, and if we had succeeded in accomplishing our object, we should have gained two advantages by getting rid of obstacles abroad as well as at home ("hear, hear," from the Protectionist benches). But this inconvenience has arisen in the conduct of these negotiations—that foreign countries misunderstood the nature of our position. We went to them, as it were, with a bargain, and they were fearful either of being over-reached or of not being of themselves sufficiently over-reaching (hear, hear). It was a struggle of skill between the parties. In the next place, how did the matter present itself? Foreign nations looked on it in this light, that we were willing to inflict an injury on ourselves by reducing our duties here to benefit them, in order that they might be induced to inflict a corresponding injury on themselves, and do us a corresponding benefit. That, however, was not the real question. That was not, in point of fact, the offer that was made. What we said to foreign countries was this—"We will do ourselves and you a simultaneous benefit, if you will act towards us in the same manner." But then arose the conflict of class interests in those foreign countries. and, as we found, so have our successors in office, that even were foreign Governments well disposed to act on the principle of reciprocity, they had not the power of carrying those measures into effect (hear, hear). Under these circumstances, I think our example is much more likely to be effectual than our negotiations (hear, hear). When foreign countries see that we reduce our duties on their commodities, not as a condition, nor as a bargain, nor by way of favour to them, but as a benefit to ourselves, and when they perceive by experience that that benefit does follow the course we are now taking, I think that they will be then much more likely to follow our example and to endeavour to secure to themselves similar advantages. Assuming—for I will not argue the question more in detail—assuming, then, that the principle of competition and the abolition of protection be good for all other descriptions of our commerce, still the question arises—"Is that

principle applicable to the trade in corn, and are there any peculiar circumstances connected with agricultural productions which ought to render them an exception to the general rule?" I hold that there is no such distinction between corn and other commodities as has been attempted to be established. I hold that there is no reason why Free Trade in Corn should not be as advantageous to the country as Free Trade in any other commodity (hear, hear). But by Free Trade I must be allowed to say, I do not mean generally and in the abstract, trade free from all duties. We are obliged to have a large revenue ("hear, hear," from the Protectionist benches). We must for that purpose levy heavy taxes. I hold that the least inconvenient and best method of raising the great bulk of those taxes is by indirect taxation. This involves Customs' duties, and when I speak of Free Trade I mean generally trade free from those duties which are merely levied for the purpose of obstructing it; but not free from those duties which are levied for revenue, and which must therefore be so adapted as to encourage, and not obstruct trade. My opinion has been, and I am free to confess that my opinion still is, that the trade in corn need not be an exception to this rule. I hold that the adoption of the principles of Free Trade will not only advance our commerce, increase the wealth and promote the prosperity of the country, but it will be attended with benefits still greater—it will give us, in addition, the chances of a permanent peace. If for the sake of securing peace we make concessions to other nations, we may fail; those may stave off the difficulties for the moment, but they will come back soon with increased embarrassment and with aggravated evils. But it is far otherwise when we propose commercial intercourse, and give to other nations equal and identical interests with ourselves to maintain peaceful relations. If monarchs are ambitious and grasping, if democracies are encroaching and aggressive, and if you wish to bind them over to keep the peace, fetter them with commerce (loud cries of "hear, hear"). Or if you wish to inspire their minds with juster and more moderate sentiments, spread wide before them the books of the merchant; from their pages they will learn far more cogent and conclusive arguments against unprovoked and unnecessary war than can be found in the soundest precepts of morality and the wisest exhortations of statesmen ("loud cries of "Divide, divide"). Without trespassing further upon the patience of the House, I beg to say that upon these grounds I shall cordially support the measures of Government. I support them, because, in my opinion, they are calculated to promote the welfare, the comfort, the happiness, and prosperity of the country; and because I think them founded upon principles which tend to secure to mankind that great and inestimable blessing—the continuance of international peace (cheers).

The House then divided; the numbers were—

Ayes	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	302
Noes	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	214

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Majority for the second reading ... 88

After a short conversation, Thursday was fixed for a Committee on the Corn Bill.

## MONDAY, MAY 4.

On reading the order of the day, that the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House on the Corn Importation Bill, on the motion that the Speaker leave the chair,

LORD G. BENTINCK rose, and remarked that a new feature had been given to the discussion since the measure had been introduced. Sir R. Peel had declared that the restrictions which he once considered were impolitic, he now believed to be unjust. It was proper, both to him and the House, that he should have an opportunity of explaining the grounds which had produced such a change during the last three months. They might be charged with producing stagnation of trade by these delays ; but the charge was applicable, not to those who opposed, but to those who proposed, the change in the law. But it was alleged that the farmers were anxious for a settlement. That was true, if affirmed of their desire for a rejection of the measure. The fluctuations of price in the markets of the Continent, not merely in wheat, but in rye and oats, the food of the people, greatly transcended the fluctuations in this country under the operation of the sliding scale ; and Mr. Huskisson, up to the last year of his life, had advocated the essential importance of steadiness of price. Our example has not yet "shaken Prussia ;" France, to judge from the language of M. Guizot, and other public men, was not likely to abandon, with us, protection to native industry ; the last news from the United States was not favourable to the adoption of our new commercial policy ; while the potato famine in Ireland receded as we approached the predicted periods. The Irish markets had been disturbed by the false alarm raised by the Government ; but it was subsiding, and prices were settling downwards. All these allegations the Noble Lord supported by figures, citations, and private documents ; and concluded by moving, as an amendment, that the House go into committee that day three months.

SIR R. PEEL expressed his surprise that after the ample details furnished from the Scarcity Commissioners any gentleman should get up and deny the existence of distress in Ireland. No doubt it was not universal ; but there was distress to an unparalleled extent, and disease, arising from deficiency of food. To check this, the Government were purchasing provisions, but the fund which supplied the means was taxation. Lord G. Bentinck charged them with propagating delusion on the subject of Ireland ; yet the Noble Lord was willing to be a party to a three months' opening of the ports in Ireland, to remedy a distress in the existence of which he did not believe. They were blamed with taking superfluous precautions ; but this Irish case would not be confined to the present year ; and had they neglected their duty, the censure upon them would have been ten times more severe. Adopting and deliberately repeating his affirmation, that the restrictions on the importation of grain, which he once believed impolitic, he now considers unjust, he proceeded to show why he thought them incompatible with justice. No doubt he should have found this out earlier ; and he admired those who from the onset have an intuitive perception of what constitutes true principles and policy. But when a man changed his opinions,

why should he not have the manliness to avow it? That was dishonesty, where conviction was concealed from a regard to personal consistency. But the question was not a personal one—it was national. Restrictions on the importation of wheat was not of general importance even to the agriculture of this country. Drawing a line from Inverness to Southampton, the wheat-growing districts would be found chiefly on the east side; and the western side of the island, as Lancashire, had no interest in restriction. The great defect of Irish agriculture, and even of this country, was the want of capital; and the delay of a final settlement of the Corn Law question prevented its application. He had not affirmed that France was ready to change her commercial policy, in imitation of our example. He relied on the prevalence of good sense. Ultimately the interest of the great body of the consumers would prevail, and they would come to see the folly of buying dear and bad hardware, cotton, and linen, instead of cheap and good. A similar feeling was growing up in the United States—in fact, there was a movement of the public mind in every commercial country on the subject of Free Trade, which our example must impel. But even if we were not met by reciprocal advances on the part of other countries, we suffered no harm by relaxing our restrictions. Direct trade was better than indirect; but even if we exported gold in return for our imports, that gold must be obtained elsewhere in exchange for some other production. He concluded by emphatically expressing his confidence in the truth of Free Trade principles, and their ultimate progress.

MR. G. BANKES deplored the tardy conversion of Sir Robert Peel, whom he had formerly compared, not to Turgot but to Neckar, as being in possession of similar virtues and weaknesses, and feared that his concessions to public opinion would lead to further and more disastrous changes.

LORD J. RUSSELL thought that whatever of argument the speech of Mr. Bankes possessed, resolved itself into an objection to any change of opinion on the part of Sir Robert Peel. The safety and security of the aristocracy in this country depended on their wise deference to public opinion, and this was compromised when they maintained a law adverse to the interests of the community, and the repeal of which was viewed with so much unnecessary alarm. There had always been a wide difference between the opinions of Sir R. Peel and such of his former supporters as now assembled “under the gangway.” If not, why had he undertaken his first Free Trade experiment? If it were their destiny to teach the nations of the world how to live, let them deeply consider which of their laws and institutions were incompatible with the general welfare. Be wise beforehand; let them be taught by Catholic emancipation, the Reform Bill and the Corn Bill; stand by institutions which are good, and give up or correct those which ought to be abolished and amended; and by that great example earn the universal title of a wise and understanding people.

MR. DISRAELI said they did not blame the Government for the precautions which they had undertaken, but for the new commercial policy which they had proposed. The space was so short between

the last and not the least able of the protection speeches of Sir R. Peel, and the development of his Free Trade schemes, that it was not to be wondered at that they were not prepared to follow him. The real question was, whether or not the measures of the Government would displace capital and labour; if they did not, he would abandon his opposition. But he insisted that they would have that effect. The capital accumulated under Protection was lent by Lombard-street bankers to Lancashire manufacturers, and they must not forget what fostered their infancy, even if they had outgrown their support. He admitted that a protective policy could not be supported on isolated and petty arguments, as peculiar burdens; if they could not make out a complete and overwhelming case, they had none. But the territorial aristocracy, under which public liberty had grown up, did not comprise the whole of the landed interest. That embraced a large body of the people. Since the time of Walpole, a considerable proportion of the soil of England had passed into the hands of individuals from our great seats of industry; and this investment of capital showed that there was nothing alien in our law to the free and ready occupation of land in this country. A country, with great capital, might go on unhurt for a time; but ultimately we must exchange more and more of the labour of this country for a decreasing amount of foreign productions.

The gallery was cleared for a division, but none took place, and the House went into Committee. It was understood that this was owing to a mistake, the Speaker not having heard a motion for the adjournment of the debate.

When the House was in Committee, and Mr. Greene had read the first clause of the bill,

LORD G. BENTINCK moved that the Chairman report progress. On this there was a division:—

For the motion	...	...	...	85
Against it	...	...	...	181
				96
Majority against it	...	.	...	96

MR. P. BENNETT then moved that the Chairman report progress, and “don’t” sit again. This created great laughter. He corrected himself by saying “report progress, and ask leave to sit again.” Another division took place, when the numbers were 166 to 55.

Another motion for adjournment was made by Mr. PACKE, on which

MR. C. BULLER asked what was the object of these repeated motions? The House ought to come to some understanding on the subject.

COLONEL SIBTHORP disclaimed anything in connection with “understandings.” Their course was straightforward. He had moved for returns which had not been produced.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER explained that the production of the returns required time.

SIR R. PEEL suggested the withdrawal of the motion, on the understanding that the Committee should not proceed that night. This was ultimately acceded to.

On Tuesday the House went into Committee on the bill; and

after passing wheat and barley, on arriving at "oats" Lord G. BENTINCK said that the reduction of the duty on oats would ruin the agriculture of Ireland, and accordingly moved that "oats" be omitted. Unluckily for the sagacity of Lord G. Bentinck, it turned out that the effect of the amendment, if it were carried, would be quite the reverse of what he intended. It would admit oats without the payment of even the nominal duty of one shilling. Lord George was obliged to abandon his amendment, and though he substituted for it an amendment to omit the whole clause, wheat, barley, oats and all, he abandoned that also; and the Corn Importation Bill, and afterwards the Customs' Bill, passed through Committee, amid great cheering.

#### THURSDAY, MAY 8.

The report on the Corn Importation Bill was brought up. On the question that it be now received,

SIR C. BURRELL moved that the report be received that day six months.

COLONEL VERNER, in seconding the amendment, observed that his reason for doing so was the alarm which he felt at the enormous change which this measure would produce not only in the condition of the small farmers of Ireland, but also in the whole commercial and financial system of the empire. The repeal of the Corn Laws would be a great national calamity, and was not required by any well-grounded apprehensions of famine in Ireland. Sir. R. Peel, in proposing it, had deserted the friends who had stood true to him for thirty years.

SIR W. JOLLIFFE took a course, as he said, "purely agricultural," and voted, in consequence, like his predecessors, in favour of that agricultural protection which has raised this country to an unprecedented height of greatness. He hoped that his anticipations might be disappointed; but he expected that this measure would produce the most direful effects upon all classes of the community.

MR. G. BANKES expressed his concurrence in the sentiments of the last speaker, and particularly in those of Colonel Verner, on whose authority he contended that the distress, though severe in some parts of Ireland, was far from universal, and that the fear of famine was already at an end. He called upon the Noble Secretary for Ireland to deny, if he could, the accuracy of that statement, and reminded him, that if he refused to give that denial, the country would infer, that the allegation of distress in that portion of the empire was merely brought forward as a pretext for the ultimate repeal of the Corn Laws. The distress of Ireland in 1822 was greater than the distress now prevailing in that country; and yet it had not been employed as a reason for altering, at that time, all the commercial and financial system of the Government. He proceeded to give an elaborate answer to the speech of Sir H. Barron, on Monday last, in the course of which he observed that if this measure should convert the land now under tillage in Ireland into pasture, it might be for the benefit of the landlords, but it would be seriously prejudicial to the labouring population, for whom he and his friends felt an honest anxiety.

**LORD LINCOLN** admitted that for all the statements made by Sir R. Peel and Sir J. Graham respecting the severe pressure now existing in Ireland, and the still severer pressure which might soon be apprehended, he was responsible. He now affirmed in his place in Parliament that those statements were not exaggerated. He appealed on that subject to Mr. Stafford O'Brien, who had gone over to Ireland almost as sceptical as to the existence of distress there as Mr. G. Bankes himself, and yet within twenty-four hours after his arrival on his estates, had written to him a letter of the most urgent nature on the amount of the existing destitution in his locality, asserting that there was a demand for aid, which, if it were not supplied in a few hours, would render it difficult to maintain the tranquillity of the district. He admitted that the distress in Ireland was not universal, but he contended that it was still general and extensive. Mr. G. Bankes might think that the state of Ireland was not so bad as the Government represented it to be, because, by looking at what was occurring in his own neighbourhood in Dorsetshire, where, according to Mr. Sheridan's letter, the rate of wages did not exceed 7s. a week, he was accustomed to behold a state of suffering almost to the same extent as in the sister country. He quoted two letters which he had recently received, one from the island of Valentia and the other from the county of Cavan, for the purpose of showing that the distress in those districts was at this moment very severe and general, and had not been in any respect exaggerated. He then described the steps which had been taken by the Government to relieve that distress, and pointed out the difference of circumstances in the apprehension of famine existing in Ireland in the year 1822 and in the year 1846.

**MR. FLOYER** read Lord Lincoln a lecture for his unnecessary allusion to the condition of the labourers of Dorsetshire. He could state from his own knowledge of the wages paid in the neighbourhood of Dorchester that it was at variance with truth to assert that the labourers of Dorsetshire had only 7s. a week as wages. The condition of these labourers had never been better than it was at present.

**MR. S. O'BRIEN** gave the strongest corroboration to the testimony of Lord Lincoln, so far as the counties of Limerick and Clare were concerned. As far as he could judge, there was at present great distress in Ireland, and the House must be prepared to hear of its increase. He lamented that Sir R. Peel had made confusion worse confounded in that country by mixing up with its distress the alteration of the Corn Laws. He ought not to have applied to a temporary distress a permanent measure.

**MR. LEFROY** entered into a long statement, which he supported by several letters and documents, for the purpose of showing that, though distress existed in particular districts of Ireland, it was not general, and had not been attended with fever and those other disastrous effects which had been so generally apprehended. He defended the landlords of Ireland from the imputations which had been cast upon them by Sir R. Peel, and asserted that they were doing everything in their power to relieve the existing pressure.

**MR. BORTHWICK** read a character of Louis XVI., drawn by Sir W.

Scott, and after applying it to Sir R. Peel, expressed a hope that the changes now in progress would not be so fatal to England as those sanctioned by Louis XVI. had proved to be to France.

MR. HENLEY endeavoured to show that the reasons urged by the Government for departing from the ancient policy of the country on the subject of the Corn Laws were not sufficient. After examining into each of those reasons in detail, and more particularly into the argument which Ministers had drawn from the statistical returns of mortality and crime for the last four years, he stated that he could not agree to this measure, because he was convinced that with a free importation of corn the wages of labour must be reduced, and that with a reduction in the wages of labour the greatest distress would befall the working classes.

MR. S. HERBERT replied to the speech of Mr. Henley, and reiterated many of the arguments which he had formerly employed in defence of the commercial policy of Her Majesty's Ministers. He thought that Mr. Bankes, on being reminded of the condition of the labouring population in his own county of Dorset, must have repented of the call which he had made upon Lord Lincoln, to give him a description of the condition of Ireland. Mr. Bankes had found fault with the Government for applying a permanent remedy to a temporary evil; but was Mr. Bankes sure that the evil would be merely temporary? He then noticed the reproaches which Mr. Bankes had cast upon the members of the Administration, and observed that there was some abuse of which he had rather be the victim than the author. When illogical inferences, drawn from incorrect premises should be heard of no more—when arithmetical mystification, invented by the political agitator who had recently appeared on the Protection benches, should be utterly forgotten, and when the great pressure of the present emergency should be fully appreciated, it would be said, not that Ministers had been traitors, but that they would have been traitors to their party, if they had led the gentlemen of England, whilst hunger and famine were threatening a portion of their fellow-countrymen, to oppose any alteration in a law of which the object was to restrict the supply of food, and at the same time to advance its price.

LORD G. BENTINCK denied that he had ever appeared in the capacity of a "political agitator." He had not addressed any meetings out of doors, but had confined the expression of his sentiments to that House, the legitimate place for them. He had not sought the leadership of the party with which he was acting; on the contrary, when this measure was first propounded, he had expected that he should have had the pleasure of opposing it under the leadership of Mr. S. Herbert. He contended that no laws had ever worked better for the public than the Corn Laws, and insisted that they ought not to be changed, and denied that in resisting the alteration of them he was endeavouring to serve any selfish interest.

SIR C. BURRELL then asked leave to withdraw his amendment; but was met with a loud cry of "no, no," from the Ministerial and Liberal Members.

An animated discussion took place on this point of form. At one period of it, a motion for the adjournment of the debate was made

by Mr. Law, but was subsequently abandoned in consequence of the interference of Sir R. Peel. At last leave was granted to withdraw the amendment. The Report was received, and the Bill was ordered to be printed, and to be read a third time on Monday.

### MONDAY, MAY 11.

On the motion of SIR J. GRAHAM, the order of the day for the third reading of this bill was read.

THE MARQUIS OF GRANBY rose to move, that the bill be read a third time that day six months. He felt that this was a subject affecting the interests of all who were dependent on agriculture. The agricultural interest had no desire to see the manufacturing decline, though they wished to see the stream of its prosperity conducted into safe channels. They would have it flow, like the noble river hard by those walls, in a full and continuous stream, and not like the mountain torrent, now devastating the country and now dried up and exhausted (hear, hear). Properly regulated manufactures were for the benefit of this great country; the agriculturists wished to see in the calm waters of manufacturing prosperity the image of their own (hear, hear). They would draw the two interests closer together; their desire was to "live and let live." Nothing could be more honourable to the manufacturers than the noble manner in which some of them had lately come forward to limit the hours of labour of their workpeople (hear, hear). To come to the subject of the Corn Law; its object was much misunderstood. It was not to starve the people, but to procure a supply of food at a constant and moderate price. This was sought in two ways. First, by raising the subsistence of the people as far as possible from their own soil, thus making them independent of foreigners, and employing the people themselves in the most healthy and manly occupation. Next, as no human laws could prevent scarcity, the Corn Law, in case of its occurring, admitted first our colonial produce, and then foreign, if the former was not sufficient. Under that Corn Law the price had been gradually cheapening for years (hear). Mr. Alison, also, in his work on population, had noticed that speculators purchased bonded warehouses, and bought grain on the continent in plentiful years, storing it in those warehouses in anticipation of an unfavourable season, till which time it lay innocuous to the British farmer, but ready to issue forth in the day of adversity, and diffuse plenty in every village and hamlet. That system was the creation of the Corn Law, and there would be no such store lying ready for bad seasons, if the importation of corn were to be free (hear, hear). The Right Hon. Baronet was beginning at the wrong end. He was overlooking the amount of our taxation (hear, hear). They had been told that "Protection was the bane of agriculture," and that what was required was competition. Well, then, if Protection was the bane of agriculture, he asked if it was not also the bane of manufactures? (hear). Was there any reason why it was the bane of the one interest and not of the other? and, if so, why did the Right Hon. Baronet subject manufactures to the injustice of an import duty of 10 per cent.? But he had a plan that would clear away all the Right Hon. Baronet's difficulties—a great commercial plan,

worthy of the views which he had taken up. M'Culloch, in his work on taxation, said that moderate taxation stimulated industry, and made people more economical, and that in this way it was of advantage to a country. Acting on this principle, let the Right Hon. Baronet make the taxation of the manufacturers 20 per cent. instead of ten, and thus he would stimulate their industry, and add to the general benefit of the country. After deploring the distress in Ireland, the Noble Marquis said the proposed measure was one that could not fail to be ruinous to that country; and he must remind the House of the statement of the Noble Lord (Lord G. Bentinck), that if they threw out of employment upwards of 500,000 farmers in Ireland, they would add to the 2,000,000 of destitute people in that country more than 3,000,000 more. If this would be the case, and he had not heard it contradicted, then they would be compelled to ask the people of this country to feed double the number they would otherwise have had to do, after having materially diminished their powers to feed them, however anxious and willing they might be (hear, hear). In the absence of information to found an argument upon, he was obliged to refer to the only argument he had heard on the subject, that when the Corn Laws were repealed the prices of corn were likely to range between 35s. and 40s. a quarter. Now, if that were so, he had a statement in his hand which had been delivered at an agricultural meeting in the country, and which struck him so much, that he wrote to the gentleman who made it, begging to have the figures. The calculation was founded on the three-field system, and supposed 100 acres to be in wheat, 100 in oats, and 100 in rape or turnips. Under the present system, the produce would be as follows:—450 quarters of wheat, at 51s. a quarter, would equal £1,147 10s.; 800 quarters of oats, at £1 0s. 5d. would equal £816 13s. 4d.. The rape would pay its own expenses; and the wheat and oats together would amount to £1,964 13s. 4d. Under Free Trade 450 quarters of wheat, at 35s. a quarter, would equal £787 10s.; 800 quarters of oats, at 14s., would equal £560; together, £1,347 10s. Adding to that sum the whole rent of £2 an acre, which was higher than rents usually were, which would be equal to £600, they had an aggregate of £1,947 10s. Therefore his informant, Mr. Everett, calculated that the farmer would be worse off by about £15 under Free Trade than he was now under the Corn Laws (hear, hear). He had other calculations by him, but he would not trouble the House with more than one of them. It was a statement of a farm of 300 acres of clay land; the rent of which, at £1 10s. an acre, would be £450, the whole amount of the produce of which on the six field system would equal at present £1,841 5s.; whereas under Free Trade that farm would only produce £1,316 5s., a difference of £525, the rent being only £450. That land, without any rent being returned, would leave the farmer a loser of £75. He had thus endeavoured to prove that the Repeal of the Corn Laws would be against all the principles of policy and justice, and he went further, and said, that even if that repeal were right and necessary, and that the time was come for it, still they could not have a permanent and satisfactory settlement as proposed by the Government. Now, he did ask that, considering the Right Hon. Baronet's position, now

that he had introduced a measure for the Repeal of the Corn Laws, which was not to come into full operation until 1849, and that there must be a dissolution of Parliament before then, what chance the Government thought there was—supposing the Corn Laws to be repealed—that this could be a permanent or satisfactory settlement of the question? (loud cheers). He thought that they had the authority of the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) that there would be much suffering among men who had not capital and skill, and that the aristocracy and landed interest and those who had capital and skill would not suffer at all. He (the Marquis of Granby) believed they would suffer, for he believed that the roots of the tree could not be struck and the branches remain uninjured; and he had yet to learn that they ought not to defend the interests of the classes they depended on, because they were defending at the same time their own interests also (hear, hear). He thought that the aristocracy and the landed interest would be unworthy of the compliment which the Right Hon. Baronet paid them the other night if, for fear of such a taunt, they were to be prevented from acting up to their judgment and the best of their belief (cheers); and if the Right Hon. Baronet was right in saying that the aristocracy and the landed interest could not be injured, still he (the Marquis of Granby) thought that would be a poor recompense to them for the loss of the yeomanry of England (loud cheers).

“——— And you, good yeomen,  
 “ Whose limbs were made in England, show us here  
 “ The mettle of your pasture; let us swear  
 “ That you are worth your breeding; which I doubt not;  
 “ For there is none of you so mean and base,  
 “ That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.  
 “ I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,  
 “ Straining upon the start. The game's afoot,  
 “ Follow your spirit; and upon this charge,  
 “ Cry—God for the Queen, England, and St. George.”

(cheers). He might add, and for the Noble Lord (Lord George Bentinck). (Cheers and laughter). He did not believe this measure would pass the Legislature, but if it did, he hoped their anticipations of evil would prove inaccurate, and that the anticipations of the Right Hon. Baronet, however vague and uncertain, might be verified. The Right Hon. Baronet had told them that he would not consent to remain at the helm unless that helm was allowed to traverse perfectly free. But he (the Marquis of Granby) feared that if the Right Hon. Baronet succeeded in altering the course of the vessel from the praiseworthy motive of reaching a port of safety more directly, his fate would be that of many a mariner before him, to be driven to leeward by currents he dreamt not of, and leave the vessel a helpless and deserted wreck on the barren and inhospitable shores of Free Trade (loud cheers). Should that happen, he would venture to prophecy that the Noble Member for Lynn and his crew would come forward and do what they could to recover the ship, but he feared that then it would be too late (cheers). He thanked the House for their great indulgence to him, and moved that the bill be read a third time that day six months.

MR. M. GASKELL thought he should be shrinking from the performance of a known duty, if he did not state as shortly as he could

the grounds on which he was unable to support the measure. If he had come to a different conclusion since his election, he would have called on his constituents to support him by a renewal of their confidence, or if they did not approve his course, to appoint a representative of opinions more in unison with their own, and he would not take advantage of the privilege they had conferred on him a short time ago, to support measures which he was sent into the House to combat. It was said by many Members, and the Noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell), among the rest that this doctrine was not recognized by the constitution, and that it struck at the root of the powers and functions of a Member of Parliament: now, he was not disposed to limit those powers and functions, and he went further than the Noble Lord, the Member for ~~Leicester~~, who thought that Parliament was not justified in passing the Septennial Act; but, however that might be, surely there was a great difference between the legislative competency of Parliament, and the individual responsibility of each member. He could conceive no course more likely to impair their just authority and functions than to disregard the opinion of their constituencies on great national questions (hear, hear). He knew that a powerful combination of parties had declared against a continuance of those laws; he knew that a section of Gentlemen opposite, whom he wished to speak of with that respect which was due to their great talents and their unvarying consistency—he knew that a section of the party opposite had acquired great influence out of doors, and a predominating influence in-doors, and he knew that the leaders of the once great party opposite had appropriated and adopted the arguments of their opponents; and if those measures were destined to succeed either in this or in any other Parliament, he trusted sincerely that they would be attended by all the benefits that the Gentlemen opposite had so long predicted, and without any of the evils which they on that (the Protection) side of the House had always anticipated; but, be the results what they might—whether they should be for evil or for good, it would at least be a satisfaction to them (the Protectionists) to reflect that it was not an untried or a small good that they had preferred to the speculative advantages which were promised them; but a system under which it was universally admitted this country had risen to the highest pitch of fame, prosperity, and power (cheers). But they had thought that a system like that ought not to be lightly regarded by the Government of a great people, and that by conceding one day that which they had denounced as mischievous the day before, was a sure means of alienating from public men of whatever party the confidence and attachment of the people (hear, hear); that at a time of great difficulty and alarm, when all party attachments were broken up, they had refused to separate the maintenance of public engagements from the promotion of public interests, and in the performance of their public duty—to many of them a most painful duty—they did not abandon or betray the interests committed to their care (cheers).

MR. SHERIDAN came forward to rescue his veracity from the reflections which Mr. Floyer on Friday last had cast upon it in replying to the observations of Lord Lincoln, who advised Mr. Bankes to

turn his attention to the peasantry of Dorsetshire, rather than to the peasantry of Ireland, as the condition of the former was almost as wretched as that of the latter. That was advice which he hoped that all the Members for Dorsetshire would take at once into their consideration. Mr. Floyer had said that his statements respecting the rate of wages in Dorsetshire were at direct variance with truth, and that he did not know a single case in the neighbourhood of Dorchester, where the labourers only received 7s. a week. He (Mr. Sheridan) then read several letters from clergymen, residing in Dorsetshire, and well acquainted with the poor, from frequently visiting them in their cottages, for the purpose of corroborating the statements which he had published in *The Times*. He then proceeded to assert, that in Dorsetshire wages were scandalously low, and quite incompetent for the maintenance of the labourers and their families. That was also the opinion of Lord Ashley, and he believed that Nobleman had lost his seat for Dorsetshire, in consequence of expressing it at a meeting at Stourminster. He might be asked how, after the details which he had read to the House, he could oppose the measure now brought forward by the Government to improve the condition of the labourer. To that question he replied by declaring that he had yet to learn that the withdrawal of all protection would improve that condition.

MR. FLOYER had no intention to reflect on the veracity of Mr. Sheridan in the speech which he had made on Friday evening, but had risen for the purpose of preventing an unfavourable impression from being created in the public mind respecting the condition of the labourers in Dorsetshire, who had been represented by Lord Lincoln to be as badly off as the wretched peasantry of Ireland. He had stated that in his own neighbourhood the rate of money wages was at the lowest 7s. a week; but he had likewise stated that the labourers had generally, besides this money payment of 7s., a house rent free, some allowance of fuel, and some potato ground—additions which made their wages equivalent to 10s. a week at least. He did not mean to say that the rate of wages in Dorsetshire was such as it ought to be; certainly it was not such as he wished it to be. He concluded by expressing his concurrence with Mr. Sheridan's remark, that the repeal of the Corn Laws would not benefit the condition of labourers in Dorsetshire.

SIR J. EASTHOPE was glad that there could now be no longer any controversy, whether the poor creatures in Dorsetshire received 7s., 8s., or 9s. a week. The fact was now admitted; and yet Mr. Floyer could not see how a law which was to render corn cheaper, could benefit them. He hoped that Mr. Floyer would go among those poor creatures, and ask them, if they had life enough left in them to give him an answer, whether it was of no consequence to them with their scanty wages whether wheat was 5s. or 7s. a bushel? This, forsooth, was an excellent illustration of the love of the Protectionists for the labouring population. He availed himself of the opportunity to express on behalf of his constituency at Leicester the deep obligations which they felt to Sir R. Peel for daring to break through the trammels of party, and for conferring on the country one of the

greatest boons which it had ever received, and from which it would receive incalculable benefit for ages to come.

MR. MILLS was surprised that no Minister had risen to reply to the two able speeches of the Noble mover and seconder of the amendment. He then proceeded to show by a variety of returns, of which his speech was almost entirely composed, that the Corn Law of 1842, as compared with the Corn Law of 1828, had proved a moderate protection to the producer, had given food at a moderate price to the consumer, and had been highly beneficial in a fiscal point of view to the Exchequer. He therefore recommended the House to let well alone, and to abstain from adopting a monstrous innovation, under which it would be impracticable for the British landowner, with his heavy taxation, to compete with the comparatively untaxed foreign cultivator, more especially when a perfectly Free Trade was established in corn in 1849. His profits on his capital must be seriously affected by the competition to which he would then be exposed ; and, if so, the labourer must also be grievously damnified by the fatal change now proposed. After dwelling in detail upon the injuries which it would inflict upon our merchants and our colonies, whom it left to struggle unprotected against hostile tariffs, and after quoting the opinion of an eloquent but anonymous American writer in illustration of the benefit which the protective system conferred on all, but more particularly on the poorer classes of the community, he concluded by thanking God that there was still another ordeal through which this measure must pass—an ordeal, which was undeterred by popular clamour, and as yet unswayed by political economy, and which, he trusted, would still interpose successfully between the people and that Minister, who had been guilty of the grossest tergiversation in abandoning his principles and his party, and who now held office merely by the sufferance of his former opponents.

SIR J. GRAHAM observed, that though the House was evidently weary of this debate, and though the public was sighing for the settlement of this question, which had now been hanging in the balance for more than two months, he must still out of respect to the Marquis of Granby and Mr. Gaskell, delay the division for a short time by replying to their able and animated speeches. The Noble Marquis and Mr. Miles had both anticipated that this measure would meet defeat in another place. He would not, like them, make any prophecy ; but his anticipation was that this question, after the discussions which had recently taken place in Parliament and elsewhere, was completely settled, and that the free importation of corn would speedily be the law of the land. As one who had a deep interest in agriculture he differed from Lord G. Bentinck, and did not think that either the landlord or the farmer had derived any benefit from these protracted discussions ; on the contrary, if he were asked who they were whom these discussions had affected most injuriously, he should reply "the farmers." There was now in this country an accumulation of 1,500,000 quarters of foreign wheat. When Parliament met in January, all the foreign corn then in the country might have been admitted at once into the market with benefit to the consumer, and without detriment to the producer.

But now, he repeated, there was a large accumulation of foreign corn in the country, owing to the various importations of it which had gradually taken place in the last three months; and the effect of this long delay would be to cause a large influx of it to pour into the market just at the time of the approaching harvest. He could not agree with Mr. Miles that the existing Corn Law was a good financial measure; for as a fiscal measure it was not right to levy a fixed duty of revenue on an article of first necessity like wheat. Neither could he agree with Mr. Miles that the producer was satisfied with the existing law; but even if the producer were satisfied, he was not the only party concerned; for the great body of the consumers must be considered, and they were dissatisfied. He then proceeded to show that the laws restricting the importation of corn into this country were not conducive to the welfare of the labourer and the tiller of the soil; and after establishing that point, went into what he called the Irish part of the case. Commenting on the expressions of Lord G. Bentinck on Friday night, he gave the most decided contradiction to his statement, that Government had received from Sir E. Blakeney, the Commander of the Forces in Ireland, any information contrary to that which it had already published. He also asserted that the report of the Poor Law Commissioner in Ireland fully sustained the assertion of Ministers as to the extent of the famine in that country; but though the Irish case was one of great pressure already, and would force itself on the attention of the House more and more every day, he had never stated that his support of this measure rested entirely upon it. The Irish case had precipitated his decision; but views of general policy, affecting the commercial, moral, and social condition of the country, had previously convinced him that a repeal of the existing restrictions on corn had become urgently and indispensably necessary. He called upon the House to consider the effect of the existing Corn Laws on our home and foreign trade. The foreign trade could only be supported by articles taken in exchange. Now the high price of provisions prevented the home consumer from purchasing our manufactures. That circumstance paralysed the home market, and the paralysis of the home market served as a stimulus for foreign exportation; that again led to a glut in the foreign markets, that glut was injurious to our foreign customers, and thus a derangement of commerce took place, which, in its ultimate result, was equally injurious to the home and foreign trade. The effect of such a state of things was most pernicious to the comfort and happiness of the labouring classes, first in the manufacturing and afterwards in the agricultural counties. For the first could not be prosperous without inducing the prosperity of the latter, not in adverse circumstances without affecting the other with their adversity. He then proceeded to contend that it was for the interest not only of the agricultural labourer, but also for the tenant-farmer and the landlord to obtain a steady price for agricultural produce, and that such steady price could only be obtained by a relaxation of restriction, and a free importation of corn. He told the Hon. Members in the gangway that they had no right to boast that they represented the landed interest

exclusively, considering the revenue received, and from which it would manufacture, the Earl of Devonport rose to come.

F. Egerton, all large landowners, Minister had risen to reply to the corn—that in the West-Riding of Yorkshire and secondly of the amendment-manufacture, Earl Fitzwilliam also supported of returns, of which commercial policy—and that in Lanarkshire the Corn Law of 1842, manufactures, the Duke of Hamilton, one moved a moderate proposition in Scotland, also upheld the same principle of moderate price to the were passed, he did not believe that any considerable point of view to of the last three years would take place in the price of corn—to let wheat was quite certain that the people would find in it a security against any sudden rise in the price of it in future. The real truth of all the arguments on this subject had been well summed up by Lord Grenville in 1815, who first asserted that laws restricting the supply of food could not produce plenty, cheapness, and steadiness of price, and then expressed his belief that monopoly must always be the parent of scarcity, dearness, and uncertainty. Such being the case, he was anxious that this bill should pass unamended and unaltered. He believed that it would protect the labourer against dear food—that it would secure to the farmer certainty in his speculations and profits—that it would reconcile the interests of the landlords with those of the rest of the community—that it would extend our commerce and place our relations with foreign powers on the most amicable footing—and that it would be memorable in our history for securing the prosperity, content, peace, and happiness of the great body of the people without reference to the exclusive interests of any peculiar class (cheers).

MR. CAYLEY contended that when Lord Grenville said monopoly was the parent of scarcity he could not have meant to apply that remark to the Corn Laws. They were protection not prohibition. With respect to the remark which the Right Hon. Baronet made respecting the Hon. Members who sat below the gangway he must be permitted to observe that he thought it ungenerous. Those gentlemen did not assume to themselves the exclusive representation of the landed interest; on the contrary, it was given to them from every quarter of the House excepting their own. The Right Hon. Baronet appeared to attach great importance to the authority of the large landed proprietors who had declared in favour of the Government measure, but it should be recollected that they formed precisely the class least likely to be seriously affected by the intended alteration in the Corn Laws. The small proprietors, the statesmen of Cumberland, the men of few acres, were sure to be the sufferers. Low prices for the produce of land would be ruinous to them; for, as the Right Hon. Baronet must well recollect, they did not pass unscathed through the terrible period of distress which succeeded a transition from a state of war to a state of peace. If they could convert the small farmers and the small proprietors into men of capital and education like themselves, the case would be widely different. But many of the farmers of England were men who had risen from the class of labourers; some of them had been *willants*—some had been shopkeepers. He looked also to the *servants*—the sufferings of the smock-frock farmers. The Corn Law was *probable* *st.*

But now, he repeated, that as to the landlords as to the labourers of this country. It would always be for the weak; the strong could take care of themselves (hear). He repeated, that low prices had been accompanied by distress, and high prices by prosperity. In 1834, when the price of wheat was 46s. 2d. per quarter, the address of the Preston operatives established the fact that the price of food was accompanied by poverty and distress. To the year 1835 there certainly was no evidence that the people benefited from low prices. The years 1835 and 1836 were periods of high prices, and of almost universal prosperity; in 1837 there came again another prostration of prices, and consequent distress: then they heard of the Hon. Member for Stockport; but how?—Did he then call for a repeal of the Corn Laws? No; his complaint, conjointly with Mr. Smith, of the Chamber of Commerce at Manchester, and others, was, that the fall of prices had caused the loss of £40,000,000 in the cotton trade alone. In the year 1842 the Right Hon. Baronet alluded to that loss as one of the causes of depression still existing. If, however, that depression was, soon after the introduction of the Right Hon. Baronet's measures, succeeded by a time of prosperity, that prosperity was to be attributed not to those measures, but to that natural reaction by which prosperity usually succeeded depression. If those measures were good, and if they caused the prosperity, why did not it continue? The famine panic, which was one of the grounds assigned by the Right Hon. Baronet for the present measure, was prospective, and the prosperity, if produced by the former measures, ought to have continued till the famine actually showed itself. Yet the fact was, that in the early part of this year there was great depression. The condition of the people was always better under high prices than under low. It was not that the agricultural labourer preferred to buy a dear loaf, but that he had better means of purchasing. On the other hand the Hon. Member for Devonshire had shown that at times of low prices there was a greater number of persons dependent on the Poor Law than at times of high prices. The Hon. Member then read a letter from Mr. Gardner, a gentleman farming land near Kingston-upon-Thames (a tenant of the Duke of Cambridge), and who stated that on searching his books he found that, whenever the price of bread was low, there had always been the most misery and destitution in his parish. In 1822, when he sold his wheat on an average for 40s. a quarter, from 100 to 150 men, able and willing to work, applied for relief. From the low price of corn, the farmers had no means of giving them work. In 1835 the state of matters was similar; and, according to his experience, the farmer must keep the labourer if he could not give him employment. The agricultural system was one under which landlords and tenants considered themselves united by peculiar ties with the labourers on their properties and farms. They felt themselves under more than the obligations of a temporary contract; they felt themselves under obligations in reference to that class whether the labourers were employed or not. If the property of the landlords and tenants were destroyed, it was impossible to say what would be the effect on the interest of the labouring classes. It was on these grounds that he upheld the

opinion he had always entertained, that this was a dangerous experiment which had been proposed by Ministers. Whatever might be the views entertained by philosophers, or by those who thought they were philosophers, it had not yet been received by the majority of the working-classes as a truism that competition, to its full extent, was an advantage (hear). Competition stimulated to improvement, but to healthy competition there were limits, and, in excess, it produced incompetency to carry on a profitable business. But there was one system of competition into which he (Mr. Cayley) was ready to enter—a competition to ameliorate the condition of the working-classes (cheers). He anticipated that from the discussion on the question of the Corn Laws, whatever might be the final result of that discussion, one great benefit would be derived; it might lead them, on both sides, to consider more than hitherto they had done—with a more earnest purpose and with more Christian feelings—the condition of the great body of the people (hear). He was convinced that, notwithstanding the sneers thrown out on that side of the House, there was no sacrifice to improve, to better the position, and to add to the comforts of the working-classes, which the landlords of this country were not ready and willing to make. Was it likely, he would ask, *prima facie*, that the members of a class who from generation to generation had been the hereditary stewards and distributors of wealth would now be guided by any mean, base, or unworthy motives in the political course affecting that distribution which they pursued? (hear, hear). He did not desire to cast any reflection on, or to make any disadvantageous contrast with any other class; but so much he would in justice say to the landlords of England (hear). It was such a competition as that he had mentioned which should be the aim of all their legislation. It was not profit alone they should seek, it was the comfort and the welfare of the people for which they should chiefly struggle, and it was only in reference to the latter result that Free Trade should be considered. The Right Hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government had promised that, should this country adopt a Free Trade policy, the example would speedily be followed by other nations. But what hopes had been held out? Mr. Huskisson, with a similar object, had in 1827 and 1828 prophesied the same thing; but instead of that, manufactures in other countries having grown and extended more and more, they had become less willing each year to reciprocate such a policy as that then and now again recommended. They could not judge of the general feeling in America from the expression of opinion from any individual member of Congress; and it was quite certain that the Free Trade States of New England, and Mr. Webster, the leader of an important party, would not be in favour of any relaxation of the existing code (hear, hear). If the greatness, the commercial greatness of England, had been the consequence of a Free Trade policy, then, indeed, M. Guizot might point out to the French Parliament the example of England. He might say—"See what Free Trade England has attained; let us do likewise;" but the very reverse was the fact. England had not become great through Free Trade, and neighbouring nations when they desired to imitate her, would read her history

(cheers). As far as experience went, there was no evidence of any existing nation having found the system of Free Trade conducive to prosperity. He believed it would here be found ruinous to the smaller farmers and traders. The great capitalists might prosper, but the small ones would be destroyed. The object of all law was to protect the weak against the strong; and the weaker classes ought to be protected against the extravagant, he might say the savage competition, that Free Trade would produce. It was said capital ought to be left to its free operation; then why did they object to Irish absentees? (hear, hear). Why did they object to the Irish ejections? They complained of the conduct of the Irish landlords: had they not a right to manage their estates as they pleased? Had they not a right to the free operation of their capital? Why did they support the Poor Laws? Were they not a disturbance of the free operation of capital? Then, with regard to the Bank; why was not every man allowed to open a bank? Because it would create inconvenience; yet that was an interference with the free operation of capital. Why were they interfering with the affairs of railways? Why did they prohibit slavery? If a man could purchase a cheaper labourer, why, on their own principle, did they restrain the free operation of his capital? They said property had its duties as well as its rights; they (the Protectionists) said capital had its duties as well as its rights (hear, hear). The Free Traders, however, contended that profit and cheapness were the most important things; the Protectionists thought they were important too, but that they were not all; they thought there were higher considerations than mere profit (hear, hear); that religion, virtue, loyalty, patriotism, the social affections, and local attachments, were of greater value still. If this cheapness-principle was to prevail as our only consideration in all these questions, what was to be the result? Was the church—were the colonies to be conducted on this principle? Those colonies would receive a deathblow by this system. Would even the Monarchy be safe, since the system of America was less costly? For the sake of the constitution let the Right Hon. Gentleman pause.

"That old familiar tree,  
 "Whose glory and renown  
 "Are spread o'er lands and sea,  
 "Say, wouldst thou have it down?  
 "Woodman, forbear thy stroke;  
 "Cut not its earth-born ties;  
 "Oh, spare that aged oak,  
 "Now towering to the skies.  
 "'Twas thy forefather's hand  
 "That placed it near thy cot;  
 "Oh, let that old oak stand,  
 "Thine axe shall harm it not.  
 "O woodman, spare that tree:  
 "Touch not a single bough;  
 "In youth it shelter'd thee,  
 "And oh, protect it now."

(Cheers.)

On the motion of Mr. NEWDEGATE the debate was then adjourned.

## TUESDAY, MAY 12.

The order of the day was then read, and the adjourned debate was resumed by

MR. NEWDEGATE, who remarked on the several statements which Sir J. Graham had addressed last night to the former supporters and the present opponents of her Majesty's Government, and endeavoured to show that the stagnation of trade, of which the Right Hon. Bart. had complained as the effect of protracted discussion, would have occurred in consequence of the manner in which the currency system had been further enforced in 1844, even if this bill had never been introduced. Sir R. Peel had gratified Mr. Cobden by proposing and carrying as far as depended on him, the repeal of the Corn Laws; and people were beginning to apprehend that he would not disappoint Mr. O'Connell, who had predicted that he would also propose a repeal of the Union. Passing from that topic, he proceeded to remind the House of the connexion existing between the currency measures of 1844 and the pressure which had been made the pretext for introducing this bill. Knowing as the country did the disastrous effects of the exportation of bullion, and recollecting the crisis which it had produced in 1825, and again in 1839, he asked Hon. Members to reflect whether a crisis quite as formidable would not be produced within a very short period after this bill became law? You would then have an influx of foreign corn, which would distress the agriculturist, and you would have, in addition, a monetary crisis created by the exportation of bullion in payment for it, which would be most embarrassing to your merchants. Besides, if you succeeded in obtaining an importation of foreign corn, you must drive a certain quantity of British corn out of the home market, and of land out of cultivation, and to that extent you must in future become dependent on foreign countries for your supply. After a long eulogy on the protective system, which had given wealth and prosperity to Leeds, Birmingham, and Manchester, he declared his intention of giving to the last his most determined resistance to this bill, which commenced in arrogance and would terminate in disaster.

MR. G. PALMER rose amid loud cries of "divide, divide" from Lord G. Bentinck, who had calculated that among the scanty number of Members in the House the Protectionists had a majority. The Hon. Member would not, however, take the hint, and proceeded for some time in the delivery of his speech, when

SIR JOHN TYRRELL having watched the departure of Hon. Members till only 34 were left in the House, moved that the numbers be counted. While the gallery was emptying, a few members rushed into the House, and on the Speaker's counting it, it was found that 40 members, the exact number necessary to constitute it were present.

MR. G. PALMER then proceeded to press his objections against the bill, and to contend that if a great exportation of gold should take place in consequence of the importation of foreign corn the Government might be compelled once more to resort to that unusual measure, the issue of an order in council for the suspension of cash payments.

CAPTAIN POLHILL explained the reasons why he had not proposed

in the committee on this bill his clause, for the purpose of compensating the poor farmers, who might be ruined by it. *The Times*, which had written a leading article upon his clause, had said that if the committee contemplated in it were ever called into existence, it would have to deal with the applications for relief of 300,000 individuals at least. The extent of the injury inflicted was no reason for not granting his clause; and if he could believe that such would be the general ruin inflicted by this bill, he would, had he 500 votes, give every one of them against it. He thought, however, that the time was at length come when this question ought to be settled one way or another. He never gave a vote with greater reluctance than the vote which he should give in favour of this bill.

MR. BENETT hoped that the House would never forget that the great object of Government ought to be the happiness of the people, and that the happiness of the people would not be promoted by converting England into a manufacturing instead of an agricultural country. The condition of the manufacturing classes was not so comfortable as that of the agricultural classes, and if he wanted any proof of it, he would quote the speech of Mr. C. Buller, who had proved that the estimated duration of life in the manufacturing districts was only 17, whilst in the agricultural districts it was 33 years.

MR. PLUMPTRE opposed the third reading of the bill, and prayed Almighty God, that the evils which he anticipated from its passing, might not take place.

MR. HASTIE, in a short speech, expressed his reasons for supporting this measure. He considered the landowners as labouring under very unnecessary alarm respecting it, as it would not produce any diminution in the amount of their rents.

SIR J. WALSH pointed out the inconsistency of the language used by Ministers in the progress of these debates. At first they would not venture to predict what would be the consequence of their own measure; but now they alleged that the price of agricultural produce would only be reduced by it to that golden mean, which, without injuring the producer, would be of considerable benefit to the consumer. He could not give credit to that allegation, nor could he believe that so many advantages would accrue from competition as Ministers pretended now that they had become proselytes to political economy. Moderate competition might stimulate; but severe competition, such as this bill would create, would paralyse agricultural improvement. No doubt there was immense room for such improvement in Great Britain; but as there was no royal road to mathematics, so was there no cheap road to agricultural improvement. Besides the enterprise, industry, and intelligence, which were necessary for the application of modern skill and science to agriculture, capital, and large capital too, was also necessary. But when the competition with which he was threatened must reduce the profits of the agriculturists, and of necessity render them more uncertain than ever, who could recommend him so to employ, or rather so to endanger his capital? He acknowledged the honesty of Sir R. Peel's motives; if guilty at all, he was only guilty of an error of judgment in bringing in this bill; but that error was a most important

one, and belonged to that class of errors which destroyed statesmen and shipwrecked empires.

MR. SHARMAN CRAWFORD recommended those who opposed this bill on the ground that it would produce a great fall in the price of provisions, to recollect that they were teaching the labourer by their arguments, that he would be greatly benefited by it, and that the present was beyond all controversy a landlord's question. Such a lesson was calculated to inflict incalculable injury upon the aristocracy of the country.

MR. F. SCOTT observed that nothing had occurred since the opening of Parliament down to the present evening, to induce him to think that Ministers were right in abandoning their old principles on the Corn Laws, or wrong in formerly maintaining them. If the object of Ministers were, as they pretended, the relief of the labouring classes, why had they not repealed the duties on malt and tea, instead of the Corn Laws? He predicted more than "an Iliad of woes" as the inevitable result of passing this measure.

LORD BROOKE opposed the bill, and quoted the opinion of Mr. Canning to prove the necessity of giving protection to agriculture in this country.

CAPTAIN VYSE followed on the same side, in a speech denouncing Free Trade as a monstrous fallacy.

MR. SEYMER admitted that the remuneration for labour in Dorsetshire was not so great as he wished it to be, but did not think that it would be improved by repealing the Corn Laws. He implored Sir R. Peel to recollect the advice which he had given the House upon the Factory Bill, and not to legislate upon a risk. If it were matter of state policy to protect the working classes against their own ignorance and improvidence on the Ten Hours' Bill, surely it was equally a matter of state policy to protect them from their own blindness on the subject of the Corn Laws.

MR. COLQUHOUN moved the adjournment of the debate.

The debate was then adjourned till Friday.

#### FRIDAY, MAY 15.

MR. COLQUHOUN began by remarking that when the Noble Lord the Member for Lynn (Lord G. Bentinck) pressed the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) as to the decrease in the price of wheat that might be expected under the proposed act, the Right Hon. Gentleman, with his usual dexterity, evaded the question, but let fall some hints which led to the conclusion that he anticipated a very considerable decline. The words attributed to him were—"Relying on the opinion of Mr. Jacob, and on the consular returns, I am not prepared to admit that, with Free Trade in corn, the price of wheat would be reduced below that of 35s."—

SIR R. PEEL.—Allow me to explain: that is a mistake. The Noble Lord asked me what I thought the price would have been in 1835, supposing there had been a Free Trade in grain; and what I said was,—“Supposing there had been a Free Trade in grain for some years preceding, I am not prepared to admit, as a necessary consequence, that wheat in that year would have been below the price at which we know it was, namely, 39s. 4d.”

MR. COLQUHOUN continued.—At all events the Right Hon. Baronet seemed to admit it to be not unlikely that, under certain circumstances, the price of wheat under Free Trade might fall as low as it fell in 1835. The League held out a hope of its being still lower—that the manufacturers would get it at 30s.; at all events there would be a great reduction in price, probably to 39s. or 40s. Now, if so, the shock to the industry of the country, mercantile, manufacturing and agricultural, would be the most severe it had ever sustained. This measure had been carried in the country—for carried in public opinion he believed it was—by holding out these hopes; but if those hopes were realized the result to the country would be a general injury. There would be an immense development of manufacturing industry, and an immense depression of agricultural, and the former not having sufficient returns at home, would be driven into the foreign markets, and then would follow the stagnation of 1841 (hear). He thought his friends had fought this battle gallantly and with singular ability, and the more they engaged in this war the more experience would they gain. Whether on the hustings or in the counties, where the Hon. Member for Stockport said he reigned supreme in the affections of the farmers, or whether in the borough towns, where he considered himself still more triumphant—in all these sufficient opportunity would be given to meet them with courage and, he hoped, with success (hear). And if they were worsted, as he thought was very likely, in the present fight, still they would, in defence of the great institutions of the country, carry on a gallant and, he hoped, ultimately successful warfare; for though great excitement now prevailed, and was in favour of these measures, that excitement would, however, pass away, and when the promises of the Hon. Gentlemen opposite were found not to be realized—when the promises they had made to the merchants, the manufacturers, and the labourers were not fulfilled in the increase of trade and manufactures—when all the hopes they had held out were proved to be visionary and fallacious, then would they (the Protectionists) appeal to the people of England with this simple question, “Who, in the hour and crisis of difficulty, were your subtle but faithless counsellors, and who your humble but consistent friends?” (cheers).

MR. C. WOOD wished to take that opportunity of stating very shortly one of the main grounds on which he supported the corn bill. He was not one of those whom the experience of the last three years had convinced; he had long ago expressed to his constituents his opinion that the landowners of England had no right to ask for Protection. He had never wavered in the opinion that any system of laws which had the effect of enhancing the price of food to the consumer for the benefit of the producer, was inexpedient and unjust. Until he had heard the arguments of the Noble Marquis opposite (the Marquis of Granby), and the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli), he had thought that the commercial advantages of a repeal of these laws was undoubted; and he thought that opposition to a free importation of corn, on the ground that it would exhaust this country of bullion, had been thoroughly exploded, until he had heard the Noble Marquis read a letter of an ancestor, written two centuries

ago; and in reply he would only wish to call the attention of the House to a fact which was far more important than any theory that could be put forward on such a matter, namely, that we had had for years past the most extraordinary importation of corn, under a low duty, coincident with the most extraordinary importation of bullion. That was a perfect contradiction to the theory of the Hon. Member and the Noble Marquis. If the House would refer to returns on the table they would find that at the end of 1838, there were £9,700,000 of bullion in the Bank of England. In the subsequent year upwards of 3,000,000 quarters of wheat were imported. The first consequence of this importation of grain necessarily was an immense exportation of bullion; insomuch, that the bullion in the Bank was reduced to £3,000,000. The next year 2,500,000 quarters of wheat were imported, and at the end of 1840 the bullion in the Bank remained nearly the same. In 1841, about 2,500,000 quarters were imported, but the bullion in the Bank was raised from £4,000,000 to £5,000,000. In 1842, the importation 3,000,000 of quarters, the bullion in the Bank rose from £5,000,000 to £10,000,000. In 1844, there were 3,250,000 quarters imported, and the amount of bullion rose to nearly £14,500,000 sterling, showing that a large importation of corn at a low duty, even though made from countries that did not take our manufactures, did not at all lead to a permanent drain of gold from this country, but quite the reverse. He confessed he did not anticipate a great fall in the price of food from the adoption of this measure as was anticipated by some. The results, whether for good or for evil, had, he thought, been greatly exaggerated on both sides. For himself he anticipated no change which increased energy on the part of the farmer might not meet. He believed that the increase of his produce would meet and more than make up for any diminution that would take place in the price of his produce (hear, hear). But with his (Mr. Wood's) feelings as to the effect of a low price of corn,—or at any rate a security against a high price of corn, which was of as much consequence—on the condition of the lower classes, he must say that whatever sacrifices it might entail upon the landlords, he believed that their feeling for the poor, and their consideration for their fellow countrymen, would induce them to make them; but he believed that it would be for the interest of all parties that the change should be made (hear, hear).

MR. P. BENNET said he had understood the Right Hon. Baronet at the head of the Government to assert that wages rose and fell in the inverse ratio of the price of provisions. Now he (Mr. Bennet) had taken great pains during a short time he had been in the country to ascertain the opinion of the people on this point. He had asked individuals of all political parties and of every grade in life, and he assured the House that, in every instance, the answer was that wages did vary with the price of the produce extracted from the land—that the moment wheat rose wages rose, and the moment wheat fell wages fell (hear, hear). He was not prepared to assert whether the rise or fall of wages was in direct proportion to the price of wheat; but he had no hesitation in saying that they rose and fell at the same time. To prove this he read a statement which he had received from an intelligent farmer, stating the prices he had received for his

wheat in certain years, and the wages which during the same period he had paid to his labourers. He remarked, also, that in many parts of the counties of Suffolk and Cambridge, it was very usual for farmers to pay their labourers the value of a peck of corn per day for their labour, and, of course, in these cases the rate of wages necessarily varied with the price of corn.

SIR R. PEEL.—As the Hon. Member seems to have misunderstood what fell from me, I beg to state exactly what I did say. I said, and I think I proved, that speaking of agricultural labourers, in the counties from which I cited examples,—and I offered to place the communications which I had received in the hands of any gentleman who wished to see them—I say I gave returns for the last thirty years from certain agricultural counties, and I said—and I think those returns proved—that the wages of the labourers did not vary in direct ratio with the price of provisions (hear). I said this, speaking of agricultural labourers, and I think I proved the fact. Speaking of manufacturing labourers, and not of agricultural labourers, I said I could show that at many times, and in many places, the wages of manufacturing labourers did vary inversely with the price of food. That was my statement (hear, hear).

MR. HUDSON said that after listening attentively to the debates on this question, he begged to assure the House and the country he had not changed his opinion of the impolicy of the measures of Government. He agreed with the Right Hon. Baronet, that the rate of wages did not bear an exact proportion to the price of wheat; but that was not the question they were now discussing. Labour, like every other article, was a question of competition; and undoubtedly when there was a large importation of foreign wheat it would generally be found that there was a great depression of the commercial interest, and consequently less employment for the artisan, and they would in the same way find prosperity of the agricultural interest arising from a large consumption of home produce (hear, hear). It would be found that a large importation of foreign produce usually led to a curtailment of the accommodation given by the banks, and hence the suffering entailed upon commercial men. He (Mr. Hudson) regarded this as purely a labourer's question—as a question of competition between this country and the corn-producing countries of the continent—a question as to whether we could continue that competition with advantage and profit to our producers; and his opinion was that we could not (hear, hear). He believed that under this bill wheat would be at the low rates it had been at some periods during the last few years. How would the English agriculturist be able to compete with the foreign grower? The lawful burdens of the landed interest amounted to 5s. an acre; while a person who had £1,000 a year in the funds might live in a garret, if he chose, and pay nothing. At all events, it did appear just that a farmer, with a farm worth £300 a year, ought not to pay £75 a year in poor rates, county rates, and highway rates. The measure appeared to him to be one of great speculation, and those who, as he did, opposed it, would have the satisfaction of feeling that they had not been provi-

sional committee men upon it, but that they had resisted the temptation to sudden gain. On the other hand, if the passing of this measure would add to the happiness of the many, and advance the welfare of the community, none would more rejoice at it than the party who had given it so strenuous an opposition (hear).

The MARQUIS OF WORCESTER had been called upon to oppose this measure by his constituents, both agricultural and manufacturing. It was idle to suppose that the repeal of these laws would not increase importation. Why, 700 beasts and 590 sheep had been recently received at one port alone from Germany and Prussia. The Right Hon. Baronet the Home Secretary, had told them, however, that this country could no longer be considered an agricultural country. At all events they seemed determined to do their best to prevent it, and to realise the assertion of the Hon. Member for Stockport, that the population of the towns ought to rule the country. There were a number of gentlemen on the Treasury bench who said that they looked upon this measure as mischievous, but that, such was their confidence in the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir. R. Peel), that they would give it their support. This was a singular principle to act upon; as well might one who had seen a jockey pull up his horse say he put confidence in that jockey, and would like to try him again. The Right Hon. Baronet had pulled his horse up and ridden for Free Trade.

MR. M. GORE wished to make a few remarks before this matter was finally settled by the House. He differed from many Hon. Gentlemen who had spoken as to the apprehensions they entertained of the effect of this measure on the interests of agriculture. He should first allude to some remarks which had been made by a tenant-farmer who had gone to Russia, a very great protectionist, and labouring under the impression that Russia and Prussia possessed an unlimited supply of corn. But after he had acquired experience he became satisfied that the people possessed neither knowledge nor means to enable them so to conduct their agricultural operations as to inflict injury, by their competition, on the British farmer. He stated a variety of circumstances in corroboration. Agricultural operations he described as being in a very primitive state, and the agricultural implements in use were of a very rude structure. "The consequence is," he observes, "that the lands, for want of strength to till them, look poverty stricken and neglected, and must under any circumstances require an immense outlay of capital to improve them, independently of the energy and skill required to overcome the difficulties as regards the shortness of the season during which anything connected with the improvement of the soil can be carried on. The earth is closed against all cultivation for seven months of continued and severe winter. One month of the year may be divided into spring and autumn, and four months into extreme heat of summer." As to the chance of extensive pastures being taken into cultivation, he stated that they were so exposed to snow storms that the greatest possible obstacles existed to the successful adoption of such a course. He says—"It may be thought that these pastures may be cultivated in case of a market for corn in England. But this

cannot take place, since they are subject to violent snow storms which drive everything before them. Such is the power of these hurricanes of wind and snow, that cattle, when these are approaching, if not prevented by the herdsmen, take fright and run into ravines, where they are smothered. Besides, these lands are subject to the visitation of locusts, and the effects of severe drought in the summer, increased by the continuous wet to which they are subject in the winter." He mentioned various other details, and stated, that in some parts of Prussia the wages of agricultural labourers were greater than those of the same class in England. Those were the remarks of a tenant-farmer who went abroad with very different opinions, and who altered his views in consequence of what came under his own personal observations. As to America, he (Mr. M. Gore) was also of opinion that the production of grain had been greatly overrated, and that there was no reason to anticipate any influx for many years, such as would prove prejudicial to the agricultural interest of this country. As to grain in America, it appeared from official returns in 1840, ascertained by the persons appointed to take the sixth census, that the total produce of the Union was,

	Bushels.				
Wheat...	...	...	...	...	84,832,272
Barley ...	...	...	...	...	4,161,501
Oats ...	...	...	...	..	123,071,341
Rye ...	...	..	...	...	18,645,567
Buckwheat ..	..	...	...	...	7,291,743
Indian corn ...	...	...	...	...	377,531,875
Total ... ..					615,515,302

He had received a communication from a gentleman in the city on the same point; it was as follows:—

"In reply to your inquiry, the exportation of flour from New Orleans is about 400,000 barrels in good years, and 200,000 barrels in ordinary years. No wheat is exported from the United States worth mention. The total average exportation per annum does not amount to 45,000 quarters for the last 13 years, 1831 to 1843, both inclusive, and this is principally sent to Canada, and is a trade likely to increase in that quarter; but experience has proved that flour is the form in which the cereal product of America must be conveyed to Europe. The average exportation of flour for 13 years does not quite reach 1,000,000 of barrels annually from all the states of the American Union collectively; it is 997,771 barrels exactly (1831 to 1843 inclusively). Of this quantity 225,000 barrels went on the average annually to Great Britain; 175,000 to British America, Canada, and Newfoundland; 135,000 to the British West Indies; 80,000 to Cuba; 170,000 to Brazil; being 785,000 barrels; and 215,000 barrels went to other places on the American continent. But it is quite apparent that the average exportation from America into Europe does not exceed 400,000 barrels annually; each barrel contains 196lb. net weight of flour. For six consecutive years the export of flour from the United States to Great Britain did not amount altogether to 55,000 barrels, or an average of 9,000 barrels per annum, and they were the years 1833 to 1838 inclusive. In the year 1813 there were

only 14,000 barrels shipped from the United States to Great Britain. Nothing is more difficult to answer with satisfaction than the American part of the corn question; but my impression is, that experience being better than prophecy, we may take the export of the past as a guide for the future, and say that America may furnish to Europe about 500,000 barrels of flour from the United States, and the same quantity from Canada to Europe. All the rest is absorbed by American wants, the West Indies, Newfoundland, the Brazils, Cuba, St. Domingo, and all the hot countries where wheat will not grow, and also to supply her mercantile marine all over the world. The price at which flour could be furnished I cannot possibly say, but it has hitherto cost over 30s. per barrel in Europe. When the price is under this rate we find supplies fall off."

He (Mr. M. Gore) might be permitted to say for his own part, with the view he took of the question, that if he thought any very great inconvenience was likely to result from the importation of corn either from America, or from the continent of Europe, he should hesitate very much before he gave his consent to the bill (hear, hear). He, for one, did not believe that it was to make bread wonderfully cheap, or to ruinously depress the home agriculture. As in the case of all great changes, some inconveniences must probably at first result; but he conceived that the measure would ultimately tend to increase the comfort, and promote the happiness, and advance the prosperity of the great mass of the inhabitants of this mighty kingdom, and that it would contribute very much, coupled with the resources of modern science, to stimulate and foster agriculture (hear). He believed that there existed in this country a spirit, energy, and activity, that would in future make it as superior to the rest of the world in agriculture and manufactures as it hitherto had been; and that the native zeal and enterprize of Englishmen would advance the science of agriculture to greater perfection than ever. He, therefore, trusted that whatever might be the fate of this measure there still might be found a Government powerful and strong; able to uphold the interests of the country at home, to enforce them abroad, and determined, amid whatever storms and tempests might rage, to maintain the majesty, the dignity, and the greatness of England (hear, hear).

Mr. LAWSON contended that the interests of the agriculturists and manufacturers were common, and stated that in the part of the country with which he was connected, the people all concurred in the sentiment of protection to native industry. He had presented petitions from fifty or sixty townships in his neighbourhood, signed by persons of all political opinions, praying the House not to pass the present measure. However other Gentlemen—some, he was sorry to say, high in office—might change their opinions, he could not, though but an humble individual, throw overboard the sentiments of his whole life, or alter them at the beck or invitation of any individual. Until the House had a statement of the probable price of corn under the new system, it was legislating in the dark. The dependence on foreign nations would be sensibly felt if war should occur. The measure also ought not to be passed by a Parliament elected on opposite principles; there ought to have been an appeal to the constituency. The effect of the measure would probably be,

that after a short time, prices would rise to a famine height, but not till the small farmers were ruined ; corn would so get into the hands of factors and speculators (hear, hear) that they would withhold the supplies from the markets till the price was high, just as there was a monopoly of the London potato market, so that though he (Mr. Lawson) paid but 2s. a bushel for potatoes in Yorkshire, in London he was paying 15s. a sack. This giving way by the Government to the League would lead to other demands; there was a league already for the repeal of the Union, and he (Mr. Lawson) had no confidence in his own mind that the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) would not declare in favour of that repeal some day ("hear, hear," from Mr. O'Connell).

MR. R. V. SMITH thought that the country, convinced that the change must arrive, felt satiety, and almost sickness, with regard to the discussion, and hence the want of excitement to which the Hon. Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson) had alluded. The present debate, however, had been somewhat free from acrimonious charges by the manufacturing and agricultural interests against one another. The concurrent measures of Government were stated not to be compensation for Corn Law repeal, though by the way, they were announced in the same speech; but a considerable portion of the local taxation of the country might have been taken off the landed interest with propriety (hear, hear). It pressed hard upon them, when stock in trade was relieved from rates, because it was difficult to levy them, and the investigation was embarrassing (hear, hear). Upon the principal question, he thought the Right Hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) was most unnecessarily risking revenue; he might have carried a low fixed duty ("no, no," from the League bench), and it would have been paid almost entirely by the foreigner, and not by the consumer. No doubt this view was become unfashionable in the House (hear, hear). There was now no choice between a sliding scale and Free Trade, and he accordingly voted for the latter. The Right Hon. Baronet had unnecessarily risked a considerable portion of the revenue in refusing a small duty. The grounds upon which the Right Hon. Baronet had based his measure might probably cause its rejection in the House of Lords, and cause a collision between the two branches of the Legislature, which he for one should be sorry to see.

MR. DISRAELI.—Sir, the Secretary of State, in his speech on the first night of the discussion, reminded gentlemen sitting on these benches, and professing opinions favourable to the protection of native industry, that in the varied and prolonged discussions of this question, which have taken place of late years, we had abandoned many of the opinions we formerly professed, and given up many of the dogmas by which we were formerly actuated. I acknowledge that fact. I believe that to be the necessary result of all discussion if, whatever the termination of it—whatever the changes in public opinion upon the matter discussed—both parties take refuge in the pride that they have not changed their opinion with reference to any single topic that had been under debate (hear, hear). I do not claim for myself, nor I believe need I claim for those around me, such a power of argument, such a force of conviction, that we have not felt

it our duty to listen with attention to the arguments addressed to the House; and, if we have found that arguments have been introduced that we could not satisfy ourselves we could answer, and of which we felt the force, we have not attempted to maintain the opinions that we could not preserve. But if this rule applies to us—if it applies to one party in the discussion—I think I can show the Secretary of State that it is not peculiar to us. I fancy that some opinions have been held by leading advocates of this measure, and have been maintained by Hon. Gentlemen opposite—I speak now of Hon. Gentlemen opposite, because I wish that we may all remember who are the originators of these ideas,—I think that opinions have been at different times ably maintained by gentlemen opposite which are no longer insisted on, and which are in that category of abandonment to which the Secretary of State referred. I might begin with the cry of cheap bread (cheers from the Protectionists). We had a Minister of the Crown—a member of the Cabinet—even in the important sessions when we might expect that the opinions of Ministers would be well matured and considered, seeing that we have at least four Cabinets a-week—a Cabinet Minister told us that the clap-trap of cheap bread was universally abandoned by all parties. It seemed to be “the fugitive cry of a dying faction.” The Hon. Member for Stockport has also announced that the cry of “cheap bread” was never one of his. That, then, has been given up; and I believe, also, other points with it. It is no longer maintained that the present Corn Law has been the cause of producing great fluctuations in price (cheers). Yet that opinion had once great authority in the country—has been brought into the discussion in this House—and if it had been alluded to as the existing opinion twelve months ago, it would have been admitted, and would certainly have been cheered. Yet it is now admitted that neither the present nor the late Corn Law, which is a stronger instance, has been productive of any great alteration in price. Now, what are we to do with those opinions, those exhausted arguments, those “exploded fallacies?” Our great national poet conceived the existence of a limbo for exploded systems. I think we should invent a limbo for political economists, where we should bind up all those arguments that have turned out to be sophistries (a laugh). Yes, sophistries; but these called arguments are the things that have agitated nations and converted a ministry (hear, hear). It is all very well to say, that after six or seven years of discussion, we have found them to be fallacies; still they are the agencies by which a certain amount of public opinion has been brought to bear on a great economical question. That public opinion has changed the policy of a Government, and, according to our belief, is perilling the destiny of a great kingdom (cheers). And now I must say a word in vindication of the Right Honourable Baronet (laughter). I think that great injustice has been done to him throughout the debate; that a justifiable misconception has universally prevailed respecting the Right Hon. Gentleman. He has been accused of a long meditated deception, of a desire worthy of a great statesman—even of an unprincipled one—to give up all the opinions by which he rose to power. I acquit the Right Hon. Gentleman of any such intention, and I do so for this reason, that

When I examine the career of the Minister who now fills a great space in the Parliamentary history of this country, I see that between thirty and forty years, from the days of Horner down to the days of the Hon. Member for Stockport, the Right Honourable Gentleman has traded on the ideas and intellects of others. His life has been a great appropriation clause. He has been the burglar of others' intellects. Open the index of Beatson, and from the days of the conqueror down to the termination of last reign you will find no statesman who has committed petty larceny on so great a scale. I believe, therefore, that when the Right Hon. Gentleman undertook his cause on either side of the House he was perfectly sincere in his advocacy. But as in the course of the discussion the conventionalities he had imbibed crumbled away from his grasp, feeling no creative power to sustain him with new arguments—feeling no spontaneous sentiment to force upon him conviction; the Right Hon. Gentleman was reduced at last to defending the noblest cause, based on the highest principles, the Right Hon. Gentleman, faithful to the law of his nature, embraced the new doctrines, the more vigorous, life-like, popular doctrines of Free Trade, just as he had embraced the doctrines of Horner; just as he had embraced the doctrine of every leading man in this country for the last thirty or forty years, with the exception of the doctrine of Parliamentary Reform, which the Whigs wisely kept as their own, and did not allow it to grow to sufficient maturity to fall into the mouth of the Right Hon. Gentleman. The Right Hon. Gentleman tells us he does not feel humiliated. It is impossible for any one to know what are the feelings of another; feeling depends in a great measure upon temperament; it depends upon the idiosyncrasy of the individual; it depends upon the organization of the animal that feels. But I tell the Right Honourable Gentleman, that although he may not feel humiliated, the country ought to feel humiliated. In place of the self-complacency of a great nation—in place of the justifiable pride of Englishmen in one who from his position has contrived to occupy the highest rank amongst his fellow-citizens, it is felt, as Dean Swift said of another Minister, that he is a gentleman who has the perpetual misfortune to be mistaken; and even now in this, the last scene of the drama, when the party whom he unintentionally betrayed and unintentionally annihilated—even now at the last scene, the Right Hon. Gentleman, faithful to the law of his being, is going to pass a project which I believe it is matter of notoriety is not of his own invention; one which may have been somewhat modified, but which, I believe, was in substance offered to another Government, and by that Government wisely rejected. The first day after the Right Hon. Gentleman made his exposition to this House, a gentleman well known to the House, and learned in all the political secrets behind the scenes, met me, and said,—“What do you think of your chief's plan?” I said I did not exactly know what to say about it, but, to use the phrase of the hour, I supposed it was a great and comprehensive plan (laughter). “Oh,” he replied, “we know all about it; it is not his plan at all, it is Popkins's plan” (roars of laughter). And, Sir, is England to be governed and convulsed for Popkins's plan? Will he go to the country with it? Will he appeal to the

people upon such a plan? Will he appeal to that ancient and famous England which was once governed by statesmen such as Burleigh and Walsingham, Bolingbroke and Walpole, Chatham and Canning,—will he appeal to England on a fantastic scheme of some presumptuous pedant? I will not believe it (cheers). I have that confidence in the common sense and common spirit of my countrymen to believe that they will no longer endure the huckstering tyranny of the Treasury bench, or of the political pedlar who bought his party in the cheapest market and sold them in the dearest (laughter and cheers). I know that there are men who tell me that the time has gone by when we may appeal to the high and honourable impulses that were once the mainstay and main element of the English character. I know that we appeal to a people who have been debauched by public gambling, and who have been stimulated and encouraged by an inefficient and shortsighted Ministry. I know that the public mind has been filled to intoxication with schemes by which the people might become rich, without the interference of industry and toil. I know, too, that all confidence in public men is lost (hear, hear). But I have faith in the primitive enduring element of English character (cheers). It may be that now, in the midnight of their intoxication, they will not heed me, but I tell them that there will be an awakening, and in the spring-tide of their frenzy I warn them of the end of trouble. That dark and inevitable hour will arrive, and perhaps they will then recur to those principles which made England great, and which, in my opinion, alone can keep England great; and it may chance that they will remember, not with unkindness those who, betrayed and deserted themselves, were neither ashamed nor afraid to struggle for the good old cause; the cause associated with principles the most popular, sentiments the most entirely national; the cause of labour, the cause of the people, the cause of England (applause).

**LORD J. RUSSELL**—In rising to address the House after the Hon. Gentleman who has just sat down, I should feel certainly considerable hesitation if I thought that the Hon. Gentleman had been equally successful in his commercial theories and in his agricultural views, as in his powerful invectives against the Right Hon. Baronet the First Minister of the Crown, whom he accuses of having deserted his party (hear, hear). But the House cannot but have felt how great was the contrast, and that the Hon. Gentleman's talent lies in wrapping up and adorning in very powerful language his invectives against the Minister, rather than in proving that the bill before the House is not a measure which should pass into a law (hear, hear); and, as it does happen that the business of to-night is to determine whether this bill shall be read a third time, and not whether we shall pass a censure upon the First Minister of the Crown, I feel much comforted in addressing the House after the Hon. Gentleman (hear, hear). I acknowledge that the Hon. Member had a good opportunity—for I am rather a spectator than a party concerned—which has not been neglected by him, of dwelling upon the conduct of the Hon. Members opposite with reference to this subject. But to begin with the beginning, according to the old rule. The Hon. Member begins by an accusation of abandoned arguments. I do not

ask this need at all hang upon the minds of the Hon. Gentleman and his party; we have no right to complain, for they have not abandoned arguments which are not merely old, but have been repeated twenty, fifty, or a hundred times; arguments which we supposed had been disposed of and become obsolete (hear, hear). And that there is not any one of the arguments of the Protectionists which has been abandoned by them. The Hon. Member said that we have abandoned the doctrine that protection is the bane of agriculture. I have not abandoned that doctrine, for I do consider that the agriculture of this country has been injured by protection. I do not deny that under that system there has been high cultivation in several parts of the country; but in other parts of the country cultivation is still in a backward state; and in those parts where there is good agriculture it dates only from six, or eight, or ten years ago; and my opinion is, that if protection had not been kept up, the agriculture of this country would have been greatly improved. If it must be admitted that within a few years agriculture has made enormous advances in this country, they have not been equal to the impulse given to agriculture by the number of persons seeking to possess property and to cultivate farms; and it is only since about ten years ago that these great advances have been made. But the Noble Lord who commenced this debate asked me whether protection was not the bane of manufacture, and I do say it is. First, with respect to cotton and wool, the protection being insufficient, did no harm; but where the protection has been an effectual protection, trade and manufactures have been injured by that protection. But let me suppose that instead of altering that system of protection, no such system had ever existed, and we bought our wheat, and bread, and manufactures as cheaply as we could, and imposed taxes solely for revenue; I should like to know what would be thought of a Minister who should come down to Parliament and say—"I have a great plan to propose, in order to promote the domestic industry of the country; I propose that you should pay dearer for the articles you consume; that you should pay a high price for your bread, and high prices for your coffee and your sugar." Why, if that were the case, I believe that such a system, if proposed now for the first time, would be scouted at once, and not the authority of St. George himself, far less that of his namesake, would succeed in persuading the House to adopt it. But this is not a new thing proposed for the first time; it is an old system, and the question is, how it is to be changed; and I must beg the permission of the House for a few minutes whilst I state what has been my course on the subject of the Corn Laws for a number of years past. When I gave my support to the principles of Mr. Huskisson, I considered him the soundest Minister, in his views respecting corn and commerce, the country ever had, and I never voted against him. But when I perceived the working of the bill of 1828, and weighed the arguments and observations respecting that measure, as I thought that bill was working injuriously to the country, I stated, first to Mr. Ricardo, and afterwards to the House, that my opinion had been changing in favour of a fixed duty, and I thought then that a moderate fixed duty was the best system that could be adopted, and a permanent fixed duty of 10s. a quarter was

first mentioned by me to Mr. Ricardo. In the year 1840 that question was again brought before the House, and I again stated my opinion in favour of a fixed duty; but I wish to show further, that that was not a solitary opinion, and that of the Government to which I belonged the greater portion had stated the same opinion. In 1840 the question of the Corn Laws was brought before both Houses, in the House of Lords by Lord Fitzwilliam, and on those two occasions, 11 members of Lord Melbourne's Cabinet voted for a consideration of the Corn Laws—in the House of Lords for a resolution that it was expedient to reconsider them, and in this House for a Committee, I declaring that either myself or my Right Hon. Friend, then the President of the Board of Trade, would propose a fixed duty, if that Committee were granted. I said at that time that I thought the settlement of the tithe question and the New Poor Law made a great difference as to the corn question, and that a greater competition with foreign corn and foreign produce might be adopted with safety to British agriculture. There were two or three Members of the Cabinet who did not give any opinion on the subject, but those who did, Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister, and one other Member of the Cabinet voted against any change. There was an opinion of Lord Melbourne's given on the occasion, which has been so often referred to that I beg to state what Lord Melbourne did say on the occasion (hear). Referring to Lord Fitzwilliam, he said—"The Noble Earl proposes that it is neither expedient nor necessary to maintain the present Corn Laws. Now, although I am distinctly of opinion that it is expedient, yet I wish to guard myself against being supposed to be determined always to maintain the existing laws. I never pledged myself to that, nor do I mean to do so. It is no stubborn question of principle, and I will not pledge myself that various considerations of policy might not arise which would justify, if not render necessary, a different course." Now, with that opinion so given by Lord Melbourne while he voted against the proposed change, and four members of the Cabinet in the other House, and all those who were in this House, declaring for the change, that was going as far in favour of a change in the Corn Laws as Mr. Canning ever went at the end of his life on the Catholic question. Then I say, after these facts in 1839 and 1840, that the whole Ministry as an united Cabinet should in 1841 propose a change in the Corn Laws was not surprising (hear). Sir, I feel justified in thus troubling the House with this detail, because I know that it has been over and over again said, for years, that the proposal of 1841 was a sudden thought produced by the difficulties of the Ministry. The fact was, that we had long, as individual members of the Government, been for a fixed duty, but then we for the first time proposed, as a Ministry, what we thought should be the amount of that fixed duty. I have already said that if the circumstances of 1841 could come over again, I should still be of opinion that a moderate fixed duty would be the best change from the law of 1828. I was of opinion that when the laws of protection had not only been imbedded in your statute-book, but also incorporated in the habits of your people, these changes would be made gradually, and with a general assent. I believe that the manufacturing interest and the Anti-Corn Law

sue would then have been prepared to accept even an 8s. duty, though they would still have considered it a high duty ("no, no"). I have authority, good authority, for making that statement, (hear, hear). Sir, from that time to the middle of last year I was still the advocate of a fixed duty, as being the best mode of changing the system. I considered, that after a fixed duty had lasted for a number of years, and a steady trade in corn had been the consequence, the change to Free Trade would almost be imperceptible, and that it would excite no panic or alarm. But, Sir, when those changes were obstinately resisted, when for seven years the association called the Anti-Corn Law League had advocated this question in public, and had made the deepest impression on the public mind, the question was no longer the same aspect. Having had the offer of a fixed duty rejected, there was not, from the days of the Sibyl down to the time when Mr. Canning threw over the securities on the Catholic question, any precedent for adhering to an offer that had been rejected (hear, hear). Therefore I had to consider last year, and I think I have to consider it now, whether there was anything short of the settlement proposed by the Right Hon. Baronet, resting on total repeal, which was likely to give satisfaction to the country, or to terminate the angry discussions on the question (hear). Had I been able to carry a fixed duty with the general consent of both the manufacturing and agricultural interests, and with the concurrence of the great body of the people, I might have felt proud to accomplish that object. But to be placed in the situation of defending a duty which could scarcely be called a large protection, and yet which would be the constant source of irritation—to defend such a duty from year to year, and debate after debate, would have been a position which I confess I was not anxious to occupy. I am, therefore, of opinion, that as matters now stand, the question is between keeping up the present protection, which most Gentlemen seem to think can scarcely be maintained, and the total abolition, after the lapse of a few years, which the Right Hon. Baronet proposes of all the duties on corn. Do I say that it is the way in which I should at first have wished to have made the change? No; I agree with Adam Smith and Ricardo, and others, that such changes should be gradual, and so conducted as to inflict as little injury as possible on existing interests; but, as matters now stand, and as the question is now put before the country, believing that repeal of the Corn Laws is a right object, and that in itself it is the best system, I see no course between keeping up the system of protection as it exists, or to come to a total repeal almost immediately (hear, hear). I do not feel those apprehensions which the Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Disraeli) has expressed of an increased foreign trade in corn; I think that in some years great quantities of corn will come into this country in the expectation of prices which will not be realised; but that there will be a permanent depression of the market such as to cripple the agriculture of this country is not an apprehension that I think need be felt (hear, hear). The Hon. Gentleman ended his speech by giving an account of the mode in which the Right Hon. Gentleman opposite came into power, and of the manner in which he abandoned the principles he before professed. Now, upon this

subject, I cannot agree in thinking that all the blame belongs exclusively to the Right Hon. Gentleman and his colleagues ; I think that some part of it must be shared by those who for so many years have been his followers (cheers). I think, indeed, that the Right Hon. Gentleman, coming forward to declare that that system of protection, of which he has long been the upholder, was unjust, having declared some four years ago that another bill of which he was a great opponent in opposition, was fraught with injustice and founded on injustice, shows a want of wisdom in his former opinions upon political matters. But when I consider what the party was which existed in 1841, I am not one of those who lament the disruption which has taken place (cheers). I will frankly confess that, in my opinion, there was one inherent defect in that great Conservative party which came into power in 1841. In fairness they ought to have come to some understanding when in opposition, as to the principles they were to carry out when in power (hear, hear) ; and therefore I do not wonder that they are disappointed in this and other measures. I think the Right Hon. Gentleman to blame. He ought not causelessly to have reserved his opinion (cheers from the Protection benches) ; but he ought to have stated to them fully the principles on which he acted—principles in which I see little to find fault (cheers from the Protection benches), however much they might be blamed by Hon. Gentlemen opposite. But to go on week after week and year after year in order to overturn a Government, risking the peace and safety of Ireland (cheers),—risking the security and tranquillity of the empire, without having some settled views as to the way in which Ireland might be tranquillized, and the empire governed—that was a fatal defect in their government ; and I am not sorry that that defect should have led to their dissolution. I can admire the Cavaliers of 1645, who struggled on behalf of their sovereign against popular rights—I can admire the Jacobites of 1745, who fought for the Stuarts against what I believe the just cause of the House of Hanover ; I can admire in both cases the chivalrous spirit, the determined loyalty, the firm adherence to settled opinions which led men to contend for those two unfortunate causes. But when I come to this triumphant cause of 1845, I find such an absence of all chivalry, such a want of all united principle, that in my opinion it were far better that men so disunited in principle should, as a party, be totally disconnected. Hon. Gentlemen opposite have stated that they consider the measure before the House injurious to the country. They have done great credit to themselves, not only by the great talent, but by the spirit with which they have asserted their opinions. They conceive that the bill will tend to lower this country among the nations of the globe. I consider, on the contrary, that it will tend to raise this country among the nations of the globe. I think it will tend to foster peace and amity among them. Looking at one of the greatest nations of the globe, I am happy to find there are symptoms of returning feelings of amity and good will. When I read the speeches of Webster, Calhoun, and others, I forget all the idle menace wafted from the other side of the Atlantic. I trust Her Majesty's Government will be able to fix finally the limits which divide the dominions of Her

Majesty from those of the United States ; and I trust the convention or treaty which shall settle that boundary will be but the prelude of a more intimate connexion between us and that vast commonwealth of a free people ; that we shall carry on together our manufactures and our agriculture, vying with each other, if you will, to make our productions more and more perfect, striving, in the neutral markets of the world, for pre-eminence ; striving also, in our respective branches of production, that we may clothe them and they may feed us, but hoping that there never shall be occasion to cross the bayonets of Britain and America on any bloody field whatever (loud cheers). Sir, with this wish that such may be the prelude of this bill, to which I trust the other House of Parliament, should it pass by a great majority here, will give their assent, I shall give my hearty support to the motion for the third reading (great cheering).

SIR R. PEEL.—Sir, it is now nearly three months since I first proposed, as the organ of Her Majesty's Government, that measure which I trust is about to receive, the sanction of the House of Commons ; and considering the lapse of time, considering the frequent discussions that have taken place ; considering the anxiety of the people of this country that these debates should be brought to a close, I feel, Sir, that I should be offering an insult to this House and to the country, if I condescended to bandy personalities on such an occasion as this (loud cheers). I foresaw that the course which I had taken from a sense of public duty, would expose me to serious sacrifices ; I foresaw, as its inevitable result, that I must forfeit friendships which I highly valued, that I must interrupt political relations in which I took a sincere pride ; but the smallest of the penalties which I contemplated was the continued venomous attacks of the Member for Shrewsbury (loud and vehement Opposition cheering). I will only say of that Hon. Gentleman, that if he, after reviewing the whole of my previous political life—a life of 30 years before my accession to office in 1841—if he then entertained the opinion of me which he now professes—if he thought I was guilty of those petty larcenies from Mr. Horner and others, of which he has spoken to-night, it is surprising that in 1841, after that long experience of my public career, he should have been prepared to give me his confidence ; it is still more surprising that he should have been ready, as I think he was, to unite his fortunes with mine in office (loud cheers)—thus implying the strongest proof which any public man can give of confidence in the honour and integrity of a Minister of the Crown (continued cheers). Sir, I have explained more than once what were the circumstances under which I felt it my duty to take this course. I did feel in November last that there was cause for apprehension of scarcity and famine in Ireland (“oh, oh,” and cheers). I am stating what were my apprehensions at that time, and what were the motives under which I acted ; and those apprehensions, if denied now, were at least shared by Hon. Gentlemen who sit below the gangway, because the Member for Somerset did expressly state that at the period to which I refer, he was prepared to acquiesce in a suspension of the Corn Laws (cheers) ; and another Hon. Gentleman, a recent addition to this House, who spoke with great ability the other night, the Member for Dorset, distinctly

declared that he thought I should have abandoned my duty, if I had not advised that, considering the circumstances of Ireland, the restrictions upon the import of foreign corn should be removed (cheers). I may have been wrong, but my impression was, first, that duty towards a country threatened with famine required that that which had been the ordinary remedy under all similar circumstances should be resorted to, namely, that there should be a free access to the food of man from whatever quarter it should arrive. I was prepared to give that best proof which public men can in general give of the sincerity of their opinions, by tendering my resignation of office, and devolving upon others the duty of proposing this measure. And I felt that if these laws were once suspended, and there was an unlimited access to food, the produce of other countries, I, and those with whom I acted, felt the strongest conviction that it was not for the public interest—that it was not for the interest of the agricultural party, that an attempt should be made permanently to re-impose restrictions on the import of food (cheers). I could not propose the re-establishment of the existing law with any guarantee for its permanence. As the Noble Lord says, I had acted with Mr. Huskisson in the years 1824, 1825, 1826, in revising the commercial system, and applying to that revision the principles of Free Trade. In 1842, after my accession to office, I proposed the revision of the Corn Laws. Had anything taken place at the election of 1841 which precluded that revision? Was there a public assurance given to the people of this country at the election of 1841 that the existing amount of protection to agriculture should be retained? (“yes, yes.”) There was? Then, if so, you were as guilty as I was (Opposition cheers). If there was the assurance given that the amount of protection to agriculture that existed in 1840 and 1841 should be retained, opposition ought to have been made by you to the revision of that system (cheers). Why was the removal of the prohibition upon foreign meat and foreign cattle assented to? That removal must have been utterly at variance with any assurance that the protection to agriculture which existed in 1840 and 1841 should be continued. Yet that removal was voted by this House by large majorities; and after the passing of the bill of 1842, was I not repeatedly asked this question,—“Now you have passed this bill; now you have enacted a new Corn Law, will you give a public assurance that to that law you will at all times adhere?” And did I not uniformly decline to give any such assurance? (“hear,” from the Protectionists). I said I had no intention of proposing an alteration of that law at the time the question was put to me; but I distinctly declared I would not fetter myself from the discussion of this question. These things are upon record. And then, it was impossible for me, consistent with my own convictions, to propose the re-enactment of the existing law, after the suspension of its operation, with any security of its continuance (hear, hear). I think the question that naturally arose was this,—shall we propose some diminished protection to agriculture in the state of public feeling that would exist after the suspension of restriction, or shall we propose a permanent and ultimate settlement of this question? (hear, hear). And now, after all these debates, I am firmly convinced that it is better for the agricultural interest

to contemplate the final settlement of this question, rather than to attempt the introduction of a law giving a diminished protection (cheers). My belief is, that a diminished protection would in no one respect conciliate agricultural feeling; to be of any avail, the amount of protection must be greatly diminished beyond that which at the present moment exists; I believe that it would have met as much opposition from the agricultural body as the attempt to procure a final settlement; and this I must say, nothing could be so disadvantageous as to give an ineffectual protection and yet incur all the odium of giving an adequate one (cheers). The Hon. Member for Dorsetshire (Mr. Bankes) says, "We could have fought the League with its own weapons." Yet believe me, you who are anxious for the maintenance of the aristocratic system, you who desire wisely, and justly desire, to discourage the infusion of too much of the democratic principle into the constitution of the country, although you might for a time have relied on the faggot votes you created in a moment of excitement, yet the interval would not be long before that weapon would break short in your hands! (great cheers). You would find that those additional votes created for the purpose of combatting the votes of the League, though when brought up at the first election, under the influence of an excitement connected with the Corn Laws, they might have been true to your side, yet, after the lapse of a short time, some exciting question connected with democratic feelings would arise, and then your votes and the votes of the League, not being subjected to legitimate influence would unite, and you would find you had entailed on the constitution permanent evils, for the purpose of providing a temporary remedy (cheers). I believe you were about to enter into a bitter, and ultimately an unsuccessful struggle, and that has induced me, to think that for the benefit of all classes, for the benefit of the agricultural class itself, it was desirable to come to a permanent settlement of this question. These are the motives on which I acted. I know the penalty to which I must be subject for having so acted; but I declare, even after the continuance of these debates, that I am only the more impressed with the conviction that the policy we advise is correct (hear, hear). Sir, I foresaw the consequences that have resulted from the measures which we have proposed. We were charged with the heavy responsibility of taking security against a great calamity in Ireland. We did not act lightly. We did not form our opinion upon merely local information—the information of local authorities likely to be influenced by an undue alarm. Before I and those who agreed with me came to that conclusion, we had adopted every means—by local inquiry, and the transmission of perfectly disinterested authorities to Ireland—to form a just and correct opinion. Whether we were mistaken or not,—I believe we were not mistaken,—but even if we were mistaken, a generous construction should be put upon the motives and conduct of those who are charged with the responsibility of protecting millions of the subjects of the Queen from the consequences of scarcity and famine (cheers). Sir, whatever may be the result of these discussions, I feel severely the loss of the confidence of those from almost all of whom I received such generous support. So far from expecting them, as some have

said, to adopt my opinions, I perfectly recognize the sincerity with which they adhere to their own. I recognize their perfect right, on account of the admitted failure of my speculations, to withdraw from me their confidence. I honour their motives, but I claim, and I always will claim, while intrusted with such powers and subject to such responsibility as the Minister of this great country is intrusted with, and is subject to.—I always will assert the right to give that advice which I conscientiously believe to be conducive to the general well being (loud cheers). I was not considering, according to the language of the Hon. Member for Shrewsbury, what was the best bargain to make for a party. I was considering what were the best measures to avert a great calamity, and as a secondary consideration, to relieve that interest which I was bound to protect from the odium of refusing to acquiesce in measures which I thought to be necessary for the purpose of averting that calamity (cheers). Sir, I cannot charge myself or my colleagues with having been unfaithful to the trust committed to us (cheers). I do not believe that the great institutions of this country have suffered during our administration of power (cheers). The Noble Lord (J. Russell) says he hopes that the discussions which have threatened the maintenance of amicable relations with the United States will be brought to a fortunate close. Sir, I think I can appeal to the course which we have pursued, against some obloquy, some mis-construction, some insinuations, that we were abandoning the honour of this country—I think I can appeal to the past experience of this Government, that it has been our earnest desire, by every effort consistently with the national honour, to maintain friendly relations with every country on the face of the globe. This principle, so long as we are entrusted with the management of public affairs, will continue to influence us in respect to the settlement of our unfortunate differences with the United States (cheers). Sir, if I look to the prerogative of the Crown—if I look to the position of the Church—if I look to the influence of the Aristocracy—I cannot charge myself with having taken any course inconsistent with Conservative principles, calculated to endanger the privileges of any branch of the Legislature, or of any institution of the country (cheers). My earnest wish has been, during my tenure of power, to impress the people of this country with a belief that the Legislature was animated by a sincere desire to frame its legislation upon the principles of equity and justice (cheers). I have a strong belief that the greatest object which we or any other Government can contemplate should be to elevate the social condition of that class of the people with whom we are brought into no direct relationship by the exercise of the elective franchise (cheers). I wish to convince them that our object has been so to proportion taxation, that we shall relieve industry and labour from any undue burden, and transfer it, so far as is consistent with the public good, to those who are better enabled to bear it. I look to the present peace of this country; I look to the absence of all sedition—to the absence of any commitment for a seditious offence; I look to the calm that prevails in the public mind; I look to the absence of all disaffection; I look to the increased and growing public confidence on account of the course you have taken in relieving trade from restrictions,

and industry from unjust burdens; where there was dissatisfaction I see contentment, where there was turbulence I see peace; where there was disloyalty I see loyalty; I see the disposition to confide in you, and not to agitate questions that are at the foundations of your institutions. Deprive me of power to-morrow; you can be neither depriving me of the consciousness that I have exercised the powers committed to me from no corrupt or interested motives (loud cheers), nor for the gratification of ambition or any personal object (continued cheers). But I have laboured to maintain peace abroad consistently with national honour and dignity—to uphold every public right—to increase public confidence in the justice of your decisions, and, by the means of equal law, to dispense with all coercive powers, relying on the attachment and loyalty of the great body of the people (loud and protracted cheering).

LORD G. BENTINCK rose amid loud cries of "Chair, chair!" The Right Hon. Baronet had appealed to the cheapness of food during the last three years ("divide, divide"). He admitted that it had contributed to the contentment, the morality, and the comfort of the people, but at least it had not been occasioned by the importation of foreign corn. For the cheapness and abundance of food they were indebted to the bounty of Heaven, not to her Majesty's Ministers. The abundance of money led to the establishment of railways, which had been a great cause of the increased employment given to the people during the last three years. These circumstances had led to the prosperity of the working classes, and not any importation of foreign corn. The Noble Lord then referred to the statement of Sir James Graham, that this country could not be called exclusively an agricultural country, and proceeded to give some details as to the comparative number of persons engaged in manufactures and agriculture. Of the placemen there was but one in ten who did not change their opinions, though there were 240 other members who did not change. There might be a victory, but it would not be recorded as the triumph of a sound political principle, but it would be the badge of the treachery of her Majesty's Ministers (cheers).

MR. C. P. VILLIERS said, that after hearing the speech of the Noble Lord, he could not allow him to claim all the merit of the position he had assumed for himself and his party,—of being the only conservators of religion and honour; his party had been ever regardless of the one, and the Noble Lord had been that evening forgetful of both. His party had been forgetful of the influence of Providence; they had always complained of the bounty of Providence; he (Mr. Villiers) said the law was passed to prevent cheapness, and whenever cheapness occurred, some one came forward to complain of it (cheers). The Hon. Member for Somerset had frequently complained of it in that House. The Hon. Member for Shrewsbury said they (the Free Traders) had abandoned their position. They had abandoned no position. He and his friends had not abandoned one single principle. There was not an opinion advocated for some years on that side of the House which had not been recognized—there was not a single argument which had been refuted. In November last it appeared the whole House of Commons were willing to repeal the Corn Law—in short gave up the

whole question. What justice was there to the farmers in suddenly suspending the law as Hon. Gentlemen were prepared to do then? The only remedy that suggested itself to them when there was a sufficiency of food was a suspension of the law. He believed the measure an honest one; and Ministers had had great advantage in advocating it, because they had advocated it honestly. The country was under great obligations to the Government for proposing such a measure, and that obligation was enhanced by the spirit and courage with which it had been pressed.

The House then proceeded to a division. The numbers were declared to be:—

For the third reading	..	...	...	..	327
For the amendment	...	...	..	...	229
Majority	...	...	...	..	98

The bill was then read a third time and passed amidst loud cheering.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE DIVISIONS ON THE CORN BILL.

##### THE MAJORITY (TELLERS INCLUDED).

Members for	For going into Committee, February 27. Ayes, 339			For second reading of bill, March 27. Ayes, 304			For third reading of bill, May 15. Ayes, 329		
	Whigs.	Conservatives.	Total.	Whigs.	Conservatives.	Total.	Whigs.	Conservatives.	Total.
English Counties .....	13	12	25	11	12	23	13	12	25
English Boroughs .....	143	68	211	134	65	199	142	68	210
English Universities .....	..	2	2	..	2	2	..	2	2
Welsh Counties .....	1	4	5	..	4	4	..	4	4
Welsh Boroughs .....	7	3	10	4	3	7	6	3	9
Irish Counties .....	20	4	24	11	5	16	16	4	20
Irish Boroughs .....	21	7	28	17	3	20	19	7	26
Scotch Counties .....	5	8	13	5	6	11	9	3	12
Scotch Boroughs .....	20	1	21	21	1	22	18	1	19
Totals ..	230	109	339	203	101	304	223	106	329
	Minority	242		Minority	216		Minority	231	
	Majority	97		Majority	88		Majority	98	

## THE MINORITY (TELLERS INCLUDED).

Members for	Against going into Committee, February 27. NOES, 212.			Against second reading, March 27. NOES, 216.			Against third reading, May 15. NOES, 231.		
	Whigs.	Conservatives.	Total.	Whigs.	Conservatives.	Total.	Whigs.	Conservatives.	Total.
Whigs	4	104	108	4	90	94	4	103	107
Conservatives	4	77	81	2	74	76	4	78	82
Others	..	2	2	..	2	2	..	2	2
Liberal	..	1	1	..	1	1	..	1	1
Whigs	..	8	8	..	8	8	..	8	8
Conservatives	..	2	2	..	2	2	..	2	2
Whigs	1	21	22	1	10	11	..	2	2
Conservatives	..	2	2	..	2	2	..	2	2
Others	..	2	2	..	1	1	..	10	10
Whigs	..	11	11	..	10	10	..	1	1
Conservatives	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	1	1
Total	11	231	242	7	209	216	8	222	231

## COMPARATIVE SUMMARY.

	FIRST READING.	SECOND READING.	THIRD READING.
MAJORITY (Tellers included).			
Whigs	112	102	106
Conservatives	227	202	223
Total	339	304	329
MINORITY.			
Whigs	231	208	222
Conservatives	11	8	9
Total	242	216	231
Whigs	..	54	..
Conservatives	20	20	46
Others	41	47	49
Whigs	1	1	1
Conservatives	2	2	2
Whigs	1	..	..
Conservatives	1	..	..
Whigs	1	..	..
Conservatives	1	1	..
Whigs	1	..	..
Conservatives	1	..	..
Total	658	658	658

## HOUSE OF LORDS, MAY 18.

## MONDAY.

A message from the House of Commons brought up the Corn Importation Bill, and a number of other bills.

MR. GREENE, Chairman of Committees to the House of Commons, who brought up the Corn Importation Bill, was accompanied to the bar of the House of Lords, by Mr. Cobden, Mr. Macaulay, Mr. Bright, Mr. Young, Mr. Thornely, Mr. Dennistoun, Mr. Leader, and a considerable number of other Members of the House of Commons.

THE EARL OF STRADBROKE presented a petition from a parish in Suffolk against the bill.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON moved the first reading of the new Corn Bill.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND, who was sitting on the cross-benches, immediately rose and said—"It is not my intention to go into the whole merits of the dangers to be apprehended from the proposed repeal of the Corn Laws, but still I cannot permit this bill even to be read a first time in this House without entering my protest against it. My Noble Friends the Protectionist party in this House are willing to assent to the motion which, I understand, the Government mean to make this evening, namely, that the consideration of the second reading of this bill be taken on this day se'nnight. By such a course, we prove that we are not actuated by factious views. On behalf of the agricultural interests of the empire; and on behalf of the operatives of this great country, who, we affirm are against Free Trade, we are willing to waive this objection which we might have taken, and, confident in the justice of our cause, we only ask for a fair field and no favour (hear, hear).

LORD BROUGHAM—I wish only to express my entire concurrence in the course my Noble Friend proposes to take, and my entire dissent from every other word he has uttered (laughter). Nothing could be more fair, and candid, and open, and manly—in one word, in every way more fitting and consistent with the character and conduct of my Noble Friend, than the course he has taken in objecting to the first reading of a bill sent up from the other House, and in waiting to discuss the measure fairly and fully on this day se'nnight.

THE MARQUIS OF LONDONDERRY was prepared to give his unhesitating support to the measure of her Majesty's Government.

THE EARL OF RIPON—I am extremely glad to hear that it is the intention of my Noble Friend on the cross-bench to conduct the discussion which is to take place next week on this important subject, on principles which, if adhered to, will command the approbation of the House.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND (interrupting).—I did not say so at all (laughter).

THE EARL OF RIPON—I beg my Noble Friend's pardon. I hope he will hear me say what I wish to say. The Noble Duke expressed a hope that there would be an absence of all personalities on the

ond reading of the bill. I am not surprised that my Noble Friend exhaled his feelings on the present occasion. I well know the position in respect of this question in which I stand. I know the presentations which may be made; I know the censures which may be cast upon me; I know what reproaches may be heaped upon me; but, my Lords, I am prepared to meet them on my own part, and on the part of those of my colleagues with whom I share the awful responsibility of having introduced this measure (hear, hear). My Noble Friend has talked of a distinction which, he says, prevails in our days between public and private honour. That, my Lords, is a distinction which I do not recognise; and I should not think that I retained my character privately, as a man of honour, if I could not maintain my public character in the same way (hear, hear). I beg to say to my Noble Friend, whatever threats he may hold out,—

“ There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats;  
 “ For I am arm'd so strong in honesty  
 “ That they pass by me, as the idle wind,  
 “ Which I respect not.”

The LORD CHANCELLOR then put the question that the bill be read a first time, and declared the “ contents ” to have it. The Duke of Richmond exclaimed in a somewhat loud tone—“ Not content,” but his Grace was the only Peer who expressed dissent.

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON then moved that the bill be printed.—Agreed to.

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON gave notice that he would move the second reading of the bill on Monday.

#### MONDAY, MAY 25.

This being the day appointed for the second reading of the Corn Importation Bill in the House of Lords, the passages leading to the gallery were thronged with those who had Peers' orders for admission some time before the doors were opened; the seats set apart for strangers were far too few to accommodate the applicants. The body of the House was filled very early; shortly after five o'clock there were nearly 200 Peers present.

A great number of petitions against the bill was presented by the Duke of Richmond, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Ashburton, the Earl of Charleville, and by some other Peers.

A great number of petitions was also presented in favour of the bill, or of an immediate and total repeal of the Corn Law, by the Earl of Radnor, Lord Campbell, Earl Grey, the Earl of Haddington, Lord Kinnaird, Lord Brougham, the Marquis of Londonderry, the Duke of Buccleuch, and the Marquis of Breadalbane.

The EARL OF RIPON, in rising to move the second reading of this bill, said, that however desirous he might be to compress his observations on this important question, he feared that the very importance of the question, as well as some circumstances and considerations personally applying to himself, might compel him, reluctantly, to trespass on their Lordships' patience. For that patience, then, he asked; but he did not ask for their indulgence, as that might have an appearance as if he felt he was about to do something, or that he

had done something, for which he was bound to make excuses and apologies. He was about to discharge a duty with respect to which his conscience was clear, and he had therefore no apologies to make. The only ground on which he could reconcile to himself the fitness of having a Corn Law was the apprehension which he had most sincerely entertained that, unless that system were adopted, this country would become, or at least might become, more dependent than in prudence she ought to be on the will or caprice of foreign nations (cries of "hear"). He was glad to find himself not misunderstood. That was the only ground on which he ever thought Parliament justified in imposing a Corn Law. But, undoubtedly, that was a ground which must at all times be fairly liable to question as a matter of fact; namely, whether the necessity for such a system existed; whether there were not or might not be other circumstances connected with the cultivation of the soil of this country which rendered that system no longer necessary; or which aggravated the evils belonging to all restrictions of this description. This, he thought, was what they had to consider at the present time. The first interference with the importation of corn to which he would call their Lordships' attention took place in 1791; when a Corn Law, most restrictive in its nature, though not so restrictive as some subsequent laws, was adopted. Under that law a very high duty was imposed on the importation of corn when the price was below 50s.; when the price rose to 54s. a comparatively small amount of duty was levied; and when the price was 56s. the duty fell to 6d. This law, which was strongly objected to on its proposition, continued to exist for two or three years, in fact, till it was at last entirely overturned by the effect of the seasons. It must be very well known, though it might not be within the personal recollection of some Noble Lords, that in 1795, 1796, and indeed during the remaining years of that century, and for several years at the commencement of the present, the price of corn was so enormously high that the protective enactments of the Corn Laws never came into operation at all. Year after year corn was imported without the payment of a higher duty than 6d. a quarter. During a great portion of that time the pressure of want was so severe upon the people, that the Government and the Parliament had recourse to every extra means of bringing into the country additional supplies of food. He believed during that period not less than from £1,500,000 to £2,000,000 were expended in bounties, to induce the importation of grain from any part of the world whence it could be scraped together. In 1804, it was found or thought that the law of 1791—which had been considered a perfect specimen of a protective law—was comparatively of no value. It happened that, in 1803, there had been a most abundant harvest, and the price of corn had, consequently, fallen very considerably. It was then asserted that the law of 1791 had not been sufficiently stringent; and in 1804, a measure was introduced which raised the price to which a high duty attached from 50s. to 63s.; when the price was between 63s. and 66s., a duty of 2s. 6d. was levied; and when the price was above 66s., wheat was admitted at 6d. per quarter. This measure, though not brought forward by the Government, was supported by them, and was passed. But this act was inoperative for a great por-

tion of the time during which it continued in force ; for prices continued for a succession of years at a great elevation, and there was a severe pressure upon the poorer classes of the community. When the war terminated, in 1815, it was found, or supposed to be found, that this act of 1804, which was much more stringent than the law of 1791, was nevertheless insufficient to secure to the agriculturists the benefits it was intended to insure. Accordingly, in 1815 another scheme was devised,—a scheme which was certainly not very popular, either at the time of its proposal or after the country had had a short experience of its operation. He need not trouble their Lordships by entering into any details to show the inconvenience of that law, which was supposed, when it was brought forward, to be most perfect. He did recollect, however, that very general complaints were made against it, and that those complaints did not proceed so much from those who had originally objected to the measure, as from those who had been most anxious for its adoption. He admitted that that measure was liable to great objection ; it was not a good law for the purpose it was designed to effect ; and those who most loudly condemned it were the very persons for whose benefit it had been passed. In 1820 it was admitted that this law had been utterly inefficient ; and in that year a proposition was made in the House of Commons that the subject should be referred to a committee with a view of rendering that law—the stringency of which no one could deny—still more stringent. He (the Earl of Ripon) opposed that motion ; but it was sanctioned by the House of Commons, and a committee was appointed, whose labours were subsequently restricted to the minor question as to the mode of taking the averages. A year or two afterwards another committee was appointed, and the subject was thoroughly investigated ; but their recommendations were not such as had been anticipated by the agricultural interest. The report of that committee was drawn up by Mr. Huskisson, who, though not chairman of the committee, was requested to prepare it, and a very elaborate document it was. It contained much sound reasoning and valuable information. This report became the foundation of an alteration of the law of 1815, with the object of relaxing by degrees the restrictions of that law, so as to admit foreign wheat before prices had reached the extreme height at which, under that bill, importation was likely to commence. The law for effecting this alteration was passed in 1822, but it was strongly objected to by many individuals connected with the agricultural interest. In point of fact, it never came into operation, for its operation was to depend upon the price of corn reaching a certain height, which it did not attain so long as that law remained in force. It was felt, however, that this law would be attended with great inconvenience, and it became necessary for Parliament to interfere, on more occasions than one, to suspend its operation. He (the Earl of Ripon) could not say much for the principle of a law which it was necessary to suspend at the moment a severe pressure was felt. So strong an opinion was entertained on this subject that, in 1827, the attention of Parliament was again called to the question, it having been necessary on two occasions, in 1826, to suspend the existing law. In one case the law was suspended by act of Parliament, and

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in the other by the exercise of the power vested in the executive Government. A new plan was then devised, which was intended to obviate all the difficulties of the antecedent systems, and so to manage the system of protection that the law should always execute itself. The act of Parliament for effecting this alteration was finally passed in 1828. It was introduced into Parliament by Mr. Canning in 1827; in the course of the summer of that year it reached the House of Lords, but in consequence of some alterations made in it in their Lordships' House, it did not then pass into a law. A similar measure was, however, again introduced into Parliament in 1828, and adopted; and that law continued in operation till 1842. There were, however, many circumstances in the details, the practice, and the working of that law, which in the progress of time became the subjects of much criticism and objection. Many persons who had given serious consideration to the question were of opinion that that measure was open to great objection on account of the sudden fluctuations in the amount of duty, and the sort of jumping scale which it established; and it was finally altered in 1842, when the present law received the sanction of Parliament. He had mentioned these changes for the purpose of showing that if the present system was one which it was so essential to maintain—one so closely interwoven, as had been represented, with all the interests of the country—it certainly had been the least stable system that ever was invented for the purpose of maintaining a permanent and stable principle. He must confess, that having found, notwithstanding all the imperfections of the law, and all the fears and objections of the agriculturists, that the agricultural interest had gone on in a course of gradual improvement—that the application of capital to the cultivation of the soil had extensively increased (“hear, hear,” from the Protectionists)—having seen what was going on at this very moment in that respect—having observed, moreover, that notwithstanding all the apprehensions which had been proclaimed in Parliament and elsewhere, the improvements to which he referred were still proceeding, and that there were no practical symptoms of the decline of agriculture,—and having heard of no instances of land being thrown out of cultivation, or of any disinclination being manifested on the part of the farmers or landlords to expend their capital upon the improvement of the land—he could not bring himself to think that the maintenance of the present system of protection was essential to the due, effectual, and perfect cultivation of the soil. If, then, he was entitled to look upon the existing system as one which did not bear the character of permanence, the question was at once narrowed down to a question of time. There would, however, necessarily be great differences of opinion as to this point; but the moment it was admitted that the question was merely one of time, the question of principle was put altogether out of view. If it were admitted that the question was one of time, and not of principle, no man was open to reproach who avowed his conviction that the time for an alteration of the law had arrived. This was the point of view in which he (the Earl of Ripon) contended they were bound to consider this subject. But there were some circumstances to which he felt it his duty to refer, which had a peculiar bearing at

this moment upon the present question. He would first refer to what he regarded as a most important consideration—the great, rapid, uncontrolled, and uncontrollable increase in the population of this country. That was a consideration which deserved serious attention. The tendency of population, in any country, to press upon the limits of subsistence, was a maxim which did not admit of dispute; it was established by the soundest reasoning, and by the application of indisputable facts. If, then, population had a tendency to increase almost in a geometrical ratio, and if the production of food did not keep pace with that increase, it was evident that some means must be adopted for meeting the increased demand. It had been stated, that the population of this country was increasing at the rate of 400,000 annually. Now, though the application of capital and skill to the improvement of land had tended greatly to increase the quantity of corn produced in this country, and had to some extent afforded a supply for the increasing wants of the population, it was a very remarkable circumstance, that during the last few years, though the price had not been very high, there had been a regular importation of foreign wheat to a considerable amount for consumption in this country. Now, if this corn was not wanted, he wished to know how it came to be imported into and bought in this country? Certainly, if it was necessary to bring into consumption these quantities of foreign corn, the fact was clearly established that the population had outstripped the means immediately possessed by this country of meeting their wants with regard to a supply of food. He did not know whether it was necessary to enter more at length on the subject of the measure now before the House. Every one knew what its provisions were, and the only part upon which any material difference of opinion existed was, whether the termination of the present Corn Law should be immediate or not. The proposed law continued a modified protection for three years. For himself, he did not know whether they had cause to be apprehensive of any evil consequences if an earlier termination were put to the present system (loud cheers from the Opposition benches). He felt painfully the imperfect manner in which he had attempted to argue this question. He could not suppose that what he had said would weigh with those who after due consideration had come to an opposite opinion. But he did not admit that he ought to feel any shame either for having been a party to the present measure, or, secondly, for having proposed it to the House. It might be said to be inconsistent with the opinions he had formerly expressed, and it might not be difficult to extract from his recorded language sentiments inconsistent with the principles he had now advocated. But he took no shame to himself on this account, because the only thing he had need to be ashamed of, would have been if it had proceeded from bad motives. Now, he was not conscious of being influenced by bad motives (cheers). He had acted from the solemn conviction of what was right, founded on much reflection, and stimulated by the conviction that he was not proposing a measure calculated to injure any interest in the country, but, on the contrary, to do good to all. He might be wrong. He might have forfeited by the course he was now pursuing—but that was nothing to the purpose—even the good

opinion of many who had thought well of him. He might be supposed to have abandoned unnecessarily a cause he had hitherto supported, and which some of his friends had told him he had well supported. But he did it because he thought it right; and when he came to the conclusion that the reasons upon which he had advocated former measures of this kind no longer existed, he hoped he should stand fair with their Lordships when he recommended it to them as one in the progress of which they were all equally interested.

**The DUKE OF RICHMOND**—My Lords, I move that the bill be read a second time this day six months, because I feel in my conscience that this measure is more likely to inflict a deadly blow on British industry, and is, therefore, more fraught with danger to the nation than any measure ever before proposed by any minister (cheers from the cross benches). I think we have just cause of complaint against the Noble Lord who has just resumed his seat, that he has not told your Lordships what, in his opinion, the average price of corn will be, if this measure should unfortunately pass into a law. My Lords, rash and blameable as I think they are, I cannot think that her Majesty's Ministers would introduce a measure, affecting so important an interest in the country, without forming an estimate of its probable effects. If they have, why have they withheld from the House information so necessary for the consideration of the measure? It is difficult for me to account for the conduct of her Majesty's Ministers since the last session, and especially since last November. The only surmise I can make is, that the measure now before your Lordships was not submitted to the Cabinet until they were already pledged to it by her Majesty's speech. My Lords, this is the first time a Minister has dared to bring forward a measure of this kind without being able to form an opinion upon the point I have just adverted to, and if I am wrong the Noble Lord the Vice-President of the Board of Trade will be able to set me right, by producing the estimate on the table of the House. I acquit the Noble Lord of any improper motives, but he has carried us back as far as the Corn Law of 1822, and has never said one syllable of the Corn Law of 1842 (cheers). Your Lordships are not called upon to repeal the law of 1791, nor to pass an opinion upon the law of 1821, but you are called upon to repeal the act of 1842, and respecting that act not one syllable has the Noble Lord condescended to speak. I hope and trust that your Lordships will remember that this is a question of vast importance—that your Lordships will recollect that in the eventful times which we may look forward to, it is of the greatest importance that the hereditary Legislature of this country, whose duty it is, in my opinion, to vote without favour or affection, should lay aside party feeling and political bias, and should vote according to their conscience upon a measure affecting the weal of the large mass of their fellow subjects (hear, hear). I say, my Lords, it is incumbent upon you, not only from that high duty which is always yours, but also from expediency, to vote in that manner; and when other measures are brought forward with a view to destroy the church, with a view to impair our institutions, to change the condition of this House, we shall be powerful if we then maintain, as we have hitherto maintained, the good opinion of the great body of the middle classes of

this country. But I tell your Lordships, with perfect respect, that unless you do maintain that good opinion,—and you cannot maintain it if they find you vote against all your former promises and pledges,—unless you have them with you, you will be powerless indeed (hear, hear). My Lords, in conclusion, I will only humbly, though at the same time most earnestly, implore your Lordships to vote against this measure, because I believe that, if you do not reject it, it is accepted only as an instalment of future and greater changes. And I ask you now at the outposts to fight your battle, or else, depend upon it, you will find difficulty hereafter in showing a proper front. I ask you to vote against it from the belief, on my honour, that it is a measure which is only the first attack, that it is a measure which will shake the foundations of the throne, cripple the church, endanger our institutions, and convert a hitherto happy and contented people into one of wretchedness and misery. My Lords, I believe that it will lead to endless confusion and anarchy, and I therefore call upon your Lordships to make a stand against it, and reject the measure (cheers).

The LORD CHANCELLOR then put the question, upon which

EARL FITZWILLIAM said, his Noble Friend who had just sat down had read from the conclusion of his speech a formidable list of dangers, with which he had threatened their Lordships if they assented to this measure; but he thought his Noble Friend would have done well if he had pointed out with more distinctness the grounds upon which he expected that their acquiescence in this measure would lead to such terrible results. He entertained none of those apprehensions (hear, hear). He must deal with this measure as he thought their Lordships would deal with it, as a measure of national policy, without any reference to those fears which his Noble Friend had conjured up and nourished in his own mind, in order to alarm the mind of that House of Parliament. He was about to vote for the bill, and he trusted, and believed, it would be passed by a great majority. But at the same time he was free to say that the bill which her Majesty's Ministers had proposed was not the one he would have suggested for adoption (hear). He would not deal in the language which was fit for ancient ladies, but which he did not think became great statesmen. He did not talk of the cruelties of taxing the necessities of life. He did not think there was anything inhuman, or anything unwarrantable, even under the pressure of great scarcity, in maintaining a duty upon the importation of foreign corn; and under the present act a large revenue was raised. The Government had by the bill before them wasted a great revenue which might have been raised. He had been told in Italy, that the whole thing was to be viewed together, and he confessed he thought there was to be a revision of the taxation of the country (cheers). Not a mere alteration of the Customs' duties, which was a very different thing, but that it would have been their duty to consider a revision of the Excise laws; and, in the sanguineness of his expectation, he had thought it just possible—(so little was revenue thought of by the Government, that the loss of £500,000 or £600,000 for duties on corn was deemed of no importance)—he had thought that the Ministers would at least have proposed a great diminution, if not the total repeal of the malt tax (hear, hear), and



almost the present Treasury had succeeded in converting several owners to his opinions. But let it not be forgotten that the wealthy landlords would not be the great sufferers. Those would be the smaller landlords—the country gentlemen, who formed a very large class; and a still larger class—the yeomanry of England—would be great sufferers—the men of £200 or £300 a-year, who cultivated their own land; they would indeed be the greatest sufferers. On them it would fall most heavily, and many of them it would annihilate. Then there came the tenant-farmers. He had often heard it said that the present was merely a landlord's question, and that the tenantry had nothing to do with it—that it would make no difference to them. But what was really the fact? In South Britain—he did not mean to say it was so in North Britain, but in South Britain the practice was this:—the tenant bore all the rates and charges, except the landlord's property-tax; he paid all the expenses of labour; he ran all the risk of diseases amongst his stock; he took all the chances of weather, and he divided what remained between the landlord and himself; but then he was able to do this only in theory, for he was obliged to give to the landlord a fixed money payment. Hence it was obvious that the landlord could get little more than one-fourth of the gross produce, if so much. He would suppose the rent of a farm to be £300 a-year; the gross produce then would be £1,200. If the present measure took 20 per cent. off the profit of land, the owner of the land must submit to receive only £240, where previously he received £300. But what would be the case of the tenant-farmer? Out of the £1,200 which the farm produced, £900 belonged to him; and if 20 per cent. were taken off £900, it left the farmer £720, so that by such a process the landlord lost £60, while the tenant lost £180 per annum. He would now ask whether it was a landlord's or a tenant's question? He had always occupied an independent position in that House—he would always endeavour to maintain that independence; and now, as ever, he had felt himself called upon, as far as he was able, to advance those interests which he conceived to be connected with the prosperity of the whole community (cheers).

The MARQUIS OF LONDONDERRY desired to say a few words relative to a petition which had been recently presented by the Noble Duke (the Duke of Cleveland) from the county of Durham. He (the Marquis of Londonderry) resided in the same county as the Noble Duke, and was therefore enabled to say that this petition was drawn up, before the intention of her Majesty's Government was known, at a meeting but thinly attended; and that it could not be taken as representing the general opinions of the farmers and freeholders in the county. He had lived longer in Durham than the Noble Duke, and he had good reason to know that few Protectionist Members would be returned to the next Parliament. The agricultural body in the North of England had a very strong feeling on the subject, and that feeling was not in favour of the policy which the Noble Duke called upon them to persevere in. He had the other day been conversing with a farmer at Stockton-on-Tees, and in answer to the inquiry of, "What do you expect from Sir R. Peel's measure?" he had been told that the farmers anticipated now growing two blades of grass

where before they only grew one (hear, hear). This was also his opinion. He would admit that the measure was an experiment; then it was a great experiment: and such was his confidence in the Ministers who had brought the country in all its domestic and foreign relations to the pitch of prosperity they now witnessed, that he did not see any reason why he should hesitate in following them in the course which they thought it wise and expedient to pursue. He did not believe that the measure would be attended by all the mischief the Noble Duke (Richmond) had enumerated, and if the measure was allowed due and effective operation, he thought those who were now so vociferous in condemning the Right Hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government, would again return to his standard. I had long sailed in the Right Hon. Baronet's boat; if it was sinking he would be the last person to desert it. He would stand by him still in perfect confidence, believing that, even if he should be overthrown by the combination of parties, he would recover the fall again.

LORD STANLEY then rose and addressed the House as follows:— I can assure your Lordships that it is with the most unfeigned distrust of my own powers, but at the same time with the most unhesitating conviction of the truth and strength of the case which I have to support, that I venture to submit myself to your Lordships' indulgence, while I enter into a defence of that system of law which has been designated by a Noble Earl on the other side of the House as absurd, and which has been most vehemently, but I can hardly say vigorously, assailed by those who have hitherto boldly and most strenuously defended it, and who were indeed among the principal framers of the existing act (cheers). I feel, my Lords, how much need I have of your indulgence, because I find myself unhappily, on this occasion, opposed, *impar congressus*, to all those who have been hitherto the leaders of both the great parties into which this House and the other House of Parliament have been divided. But, however much and however painfully I may feel the inequality of the contest in point of ability, I cannot admit that the weight of authority is in favour of those who propose the abolition of the Corn Laws (hear, hear). My Lords, I will not appeal—it would be invidious to do so—to the authority of the present, against the former, opinions of Noble Lords on either side of the House. I will not cite the opinions they may have formed, or the expressions they may have made use of; but, my Lords, I will venture to appeal from the authority of the living to the authority of the dead—I will venture to appeal from the authority of the statesmen of the present day to all the great names among those who have been the most liberal commercial ministers of England in times not long gone past. I will appeal to the authority of Lord Chatham, to the authority of Mr. Pitt, to the authority of Mr. Huskisson; and, my Lords, while I mention their names, I will refer to those of others whose eloquence still rings in our ears—and would to God their wisdom and prudence were still directing our councils—trusting I shall be forgiven by three of my Noble Friends who now occupy seats in this House, if I cite, in opposition to their opinions, the authority of those who first cast imperishable lustre on the names of Liverpool, of Canning, and of Grey (great cheering). But I can appeal not only to statesmen of

At the present day, I can appeal against the statesman of the present year—to the authority of all those who have swayed the destinies of this country ever since it took a prominent place among the nations of the world. The Noble Earl (Ripon) says this question was not raised by former Governments on the principle of Protection; but that if you search the records of our history from the earliest times, you will find in the most distinct form, from the preambles of successive statutes in successive ages, that the principle which guided the ministers of this country was the principle of encouraging the domestic industry, and protecting the agriculture of this country. As early as the time of Edward IV. I recollect a memorable preamble, one which might almost be applied to a statute of the present day. It recites, if I remember the words—"That whereas the labourers and occupiers in husbandry"—not the great owners of land, observe, not the great proprietors—but "the labourers and occupiers in husbandry be daily grievously endamaged by the bringing in from foreign countries of corn into this realm, when the price of corn within this realm is low," and the statute with that recital goes on to prohibit the importation of corn when the price here was below, I think, 6s. 8d. per quarter. The same principle has guided the Legislature of this country from that day to the present, varied according to the circumstances of the country, varied according to the exigencies of the times, varied according to the state of husbandry, and the state of our relations with foreign powers. But through all, without an exception, there has been maintained this principle, that in order to secure the independence of this country of foreign supplies for the food of its own people, it was the policy of this great country to give encouragement and protection to the cultivation of its own soil (hear, hear). But I will not be satisfied with appealing to home authorities. There is not one nation in the world of any eminence that has ventured up to this hour upon the bold and rash experiment upon which your Lordships are invited to enter, of leaving the provision of the food of its people unrestrained by legislation, unprotected by fiscal regulation, and subject to mere chance, or worse than that—to chance controllable and controlled by the caprice, the enmity, or the inability to supply of foreign countries (cheers). I will go through the principal nations of the earth. France and Holland have both not only a system of protection, but both have a sliding scale, and France has a sliding scale infinitely more complicated and stringent than our own. Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Germanic Confederation, Prussia, Portugal, Spain, the Roman States, Austria, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and the United States of America. Have I gone through all the principal nations of the world? Not one of all these countries has ventured to leave its agriculture unprotected, or to allow the provision of the food of its people to be dependent on foreigners. And when I see all this, not only can I not admit that the weight of authority is with the opponents of the measure, but I venture to doubt the truth of that which has been put forward as an indisputable axiom—that the *prima facie* inference is in favour of unrestricted Free Trade (hear, hear). On the contrary, I think the weight of authority, the authority of the past and the present,

of this and of all other countries, nations with every variety of soil and climate, with every variety of density and sparseness of population, under all varieties of civil institutions, from the most absolute monarchy to the most unrestricted republicanism—the universal authority of all times and countries is in favour of the system of Protection (hear, hear). I dispute that which has been held to be an indisputable axiom. I contend that the inference, the *prima* inference is, that all statesmen of former times in this country, and all other countries at the present day, have not been alike wholly destitute of political wisdom and political sagacity (cheers). I do not believe that not a single beam of enlightenment dispelled the universal darkness, till that which flashed simultaneously and with such marvellous power of conversion upon the statesmen of the present age in the month of November last (great cheering). And it will not be the least unhappy consequence of this unhappy measure that this country and the world will believe,—truly or falsely, justly or unjustly, I will not say,—that a triumph has been gained by an organized and interested association over the Minister of the Crown (cheers), and that a still more fatal triumph has been gained by the Minister of the Crown, acting under the influence of that association, over his political supporters and the independence of Parliament (loud cheering). And now, I turn from the personal part of the subject, and from the discussion of the question by whom the measure was proposed and supported, to the much more important matter, the arguments by which it is maintained. But here, I must say, we are met at the outset by a difficulty of rather a singular kind. When, in the other House of Parliament, we have asked the Minister of the Crown a question—not, I think, an unfair or an unreasonable one—what do you anticipate will be the result of this measure? the simple answer given was, that they must decline to prophecy: their prophecies failed in 1842, and they would not risk their reputation as prophets hereafter. If we ask what the effect of the measure will be, we are frankly told that they cannot say (hear, hear). Now, where is it you are about to try this experiment, of which the Minister who brings it forward cannot tell what will be the possible or probable results? The old proverb says, *fiat experimentum in corpore vili*; try your experiments on some small scale, in some insignificant corner of the globe, in some inartificial state of society; try it where a mistake would not be irrevocable; where an error in judgment would not lead to such formidable consequences. But you are going to try this experiment in the wealthiest and mightiest empire of the world; you are trying it in this England of ours, the highest and mightiest among the nations of the world—that which is in the most artificial state of society—that in which the slightest derangement of the social scale, the slightest disturbance of the relations between the different classes of the community, may produce the most extensive, serious, and irremediable mischief (cheers). And it is in this country, and supported by such arguments as you have heard from my Noble Friend to-night, that you are invited to try this great experiment, the issue of which the Minister of the Crown tells you he cannot foresee! It may be very well for an irresponsible body like the Anti-Corn Law League; but, my

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Is this conduct be natural or legitimate in the members of  
 Anti-Corn Law League, it is neither natural nor legitimate in  
 the Minister of the Crown (cheers), wielding the authority of  
 the Crown, speaking in the name of the Crown, exercising the  
 influence of his high station, and his high character, and his high  
 talents, to carry measures of deep and vital importance, of hazardous  
 and doubtful policy (hear). Your Lordships and the other House  
 of Parliament have a right to be told by the Minister, under such  
 circumstances, what is the object at which he aims; and you have a  
 right to canvass fully and distinctly, first, whether the object be in  
 all desirable; and next, whether the means which he proposes for  
 attaining it are likely to attain that object, if it be desirable. You  
 have a right to know from the Minister what he calculates upon, as  
 being the probable effect of this great measure (hear, hear). My  
 Lords, in the silence of the Government upon this point, we turn to  
 the arguments which they have made use of; and although certainly  
 one of them has been in a considerable degree abandoned by my  
 Noble Friend this evening, yet in the course of the discussions  
 that I have heard, this measure has been rested mainly upon two  
 arguments, namely, the apprehended famine in Ireland, and the  
 successful operation of the tariff of 1842 (hear, hear). But, my  
 Lords, this does not relieve my difficulty. These arguments may both  
 be invalid, as I will endeavour to show by and by that they are;  
 but valid they cannot both be, for they are mutually contradictory,  
 the one of the other. If the repeal of the Corn Laws, in any mode  
 or by any possibility, be calculated to relieve the famine in Ireland,  
 supposing always the famine to exist (hear, hear), it must be by  
 bringing a large amount of corn into consumption at so low a price  
 as to place it within the reach of the poorest and the most distressed  
 of that starving population; but, if I am not much mistaken in the  
 boast which Her Majesty's Government make of the successful  
 operation of the tariff, it is this—that while it is materially extending  
 commerce, it has not diminished, on the contrary, it has rather  
 tended to raise the price of the articles which have been subjected  
 to its operation (hear, hear). Let me, however, examine these two  
 questions—the famine, and the operation of the tariff. Now, with  
 regard to the famine, I must beg to call your Lordships' attention so  
 far back as to the period of October and November last. The Noble  
 Lord has told us that the famine was not the inducing cause of this  
 alteration in the Corn Law being proposed. With all respect for my  
 Noble Friend, I will venture to say—and I am confident I shall not  
 be contradicted by any single member of Her Majesty's Government  
 —that if it had not been for the apprehension of scarcity in Ireland,  
 and the supposed failure of the crops, your Lordships would never  
 have been asked—in the course of this session at all events—to alter  
 or repeal the Corn Law (hear, hear). When the Cabinet was called  
 together in the close of October last, it was for the purpose of  
 considering the state of Ireland. Papers were laid before us,  
 representing the failure of the potato crop, the anxiety that was felt,  
 the reports of certain learned professors—which reports, by-the-by,  
 tended mainly to increase the anxiety, and, with all respect for  
 whom, if their advice had been followed I believe the evil would

have been aggravated (hear, hear). We were called upon to consider what steps should be taken for the relief of Irish distress; and it was for the relief of Irish distress, and it was in consequence of the supposed failure of the potato crop, that we were invited to open the ports by Order in Council, and thereby to suspend the operation of the Corn Law (hear, hear). My Lords, I speak of the famine as a vision—an utterly baseless vision, which haunted the imagination and disturbed the judgment of the Government. I speak in very different terms, and with very different feelings, of that amount of destitution and distress, into which a large body of the small cottiers in Ireland have been thrown by the partial or total failure of their potato crop; but I conceive that this is a kind of distress, this species of destitution, upon which your repeal of the Corn Law, whatever effect it produces upon the price of wheat, will produce no more effect, and can produce no more, than if you were to pass an Act which should reduce the price of pine-apples (hear, hear). The relief to these people is not that corn is dear, or potatoes dear; corn never was dear; the price of corn, in spite of all that took place, never rose to any very high pitch. The state of distress and suffering to which these people are exposed, arises from this, that they are not, as the labourer in England is, dependent for their subsistence upon labour and steady wages, the produce of their gardens serving to eke out their wages with some little additional comfort; but that they have invested their labour, invested their all, in the cultivation of some small plot of ground, for which they pay a large rent, and if the produce of that plot fails, they have no labour to look to, their stock of provisions is gone, and, having no means of employment, they have no prospect of obtaining money, wherewith to purchase food to replace the potato crop which has failed. That is the cause of the distress of the smaller cottiers of Ireland (hear, hear). But now I pray you to mark another class, and it is not an unimportant one, a class which, including the families of those who compose it, comprises probably 5,000,000 or 6,000,000 of the people of Ireland, namely, the small farmers and occupiers of land in Ireland. In what state are they placed? Their system of cultivation is oats and potatoes; their potato crop had failed, or a great part of it was diseased; it was unfit for human food. It was not unfit for the food of animals, and many of them very wisely increased the number of their pigs, fattened them upon the diseased potatoes, and realized a very fair profit. But what was the compensation to a farmer of this class? Why, the potato crop had failed, but his oats were superabundant, bringing a very fair price; and he had in his superabundant oats the means of sustaining himself, and, in their price, of recovering in some degree the loss of his potatoes. And by way of relieving that man you propose, when he has lost his potatoes, to inflict a further injury upon him by reducing the price of his oats (hear, hear). Therefore, as applicable to the famine in Ireland—if famine there were—I took the liberty of recording my opinion against the proposed opening of the ports. At the same time, so strongly and so forcibly did I feel the importance of unanimity in the Cabinet,—so strongly was I convinced of the injury done by the breaking up of any Government, that although exhibiting serious doubts whether

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sion of the Corn Laws, and the opening of the ports would  
 vail, or might not even be injurious, I intimated my entire  
 as to yield my own opinion, and consent to a suspension of  
 Corn Law, provided a suspension was proposed (hear, hear).  
 when I was told that that temporary exigency, that passing  
 urgency of apprehended scarcity in Ireland, was not to lead to a  
 eddy commensurate in duration with the expected evil, but to  
 made the groundwork of suspending, for the purpose of not re-  
 tacting, the Corn Law, I felt that I could not take that course  
 consistently with my own feeling as an honourable man; and that,  
 with such ulterior views, to propose to Parliament to sanction the  
 opening of the ports, would be to lead those who were disposed to  
 support us, into a snare and a delusion (cheers). My Lords, we are  
 called upon to abandon the Corn Law of 1842. And why? In what  
 respect has it deceived your expectations? How has it falsified your  
 prophecies? Your prophecies have been realized to a wonderful  
 degree of accuracy (hear, hear). In what respect has it failed?  
 The object of this and of every Corn Law, I take to be, to place  
 this country in a state of virtual independence of foreign countries  
 for its supply of food. I know that object may be scouted by some  
 of the very enlightened politicians of the present day; but it was  
 not thought unworthy the consideration of great men, not long passed  
 away from among us; and if your Lordships will forgive me for  
 referring to it, I will quote a passage from a letter of Mr. Huskisson,  
 which puts the whole question in a few words in the clearest light  
 in which it can be seen. He was writing at the close of the war,  
 and his sentiments are worthy of the deepest attention. We have  
 forgotten the circumstances of that time—some of us, indeed, are  
 too young to remember them, but generally, we seem not to re-  
 member, in dealing with this question, the evils to which, prior to  
 1815, this country had been subjected from its dependence for a  
 supply of corn on foreign countries. On that occasion Mr. Huskisson  
 said, “The present war, it is true, is now at an end; but peace is  
 at all times too precarious not to induce us to guard against the  
 repetition of similar calamities whenever hostilities may be renewed.  
 But even in peace the habitual dependence on foreign supply is  
 dangerous. We place the subsistence of our own population not  
 only at the mercy of foreign powers, but also on their being able  
 to spare as much corn as we may want to buy. Suppose, as it  
 frequently happens, the harvest in the same year to be a short one,  
 not only in this country but in foreign countries from which we are  
 fed, what follows? The habitually exporting country—France, for  
 instance—stops the export of its corn, and feeds its people without  
 any great pressure. The habitually importing country, England,  
 which, even in a good season, has hitherto depended on the aid of  
 foreign corn, deprived of that aid in a year of scarcity, is driven to  
 distress bordering upon famine. There is, therefore, no effectual  
 security, either in peace or war, against the frequent return of  
 scarcity approaching to starvation, such as of late years we have so  
 frequently experienced, but in our maintaining ourselves habitually  
 independent of foreign supply. Let the bread we eat be the produce  
 of corn grown among ourselves, and for one, I care not how cheap it

is. The cheaper the better. It is cheap now, and I rejoice at it, because it is altogether owing to a sufficiency of corn of our own growth. But in order to ensure a continuance of that cheapness and that sufficiency, we must ensure to our own growers that protection against foreign import which has produced these blessings, and by which alone they can be permanently maintained. The history of the country for the last 170 years clearly proves, on the one hand, that cheapness produced by foreign import is the sure forerunner of scarcity, and on the other, that a steady home supply is the only safe foundation of steady and moderate prices" (hear). Now, my Lords, you aim then, by a Corn Law, at independence of foreign supply, accompanied and produced by such an encouragement to your home-grower, as shall guarantee him up to a certain point, against foreign competition, and shall, beyond that point, protect the consumer against exorbitant and extravagantly high prices, protecting all parties against that which is most injurious to all—rapid and sudden fluctuations. Now, I say, that beyond any law which has ever been in force in this or any other country, this law of 1842 has accomplished these its great and main objects (hear, hear). First, with regard to the provision of a home supply, we have no statistical tables in this country (and it is a great pity that we have not) by which we could ascertain, year by year, the amount of the production of the country; but if it can be proved that in a state of society in which the population is increasing as rapidly as has been stated by the Noble Earl, and in which, let me add, the proportion of wheat consumers is increasing more rapidly still, the population of this great country has not alone had a sufficiency to meet the increased demand, but has had that sufficiency at a reduced price, and with a diminished and not an increased supply from abroad, then, my Lords, I maintain that the inference is that protection has fully effected its object, and that by its means we have been enabled to keep pace with the increasing demand of our increasing population. I will show you, my Lords, that this has been the case. I must take a series of years, because the quantities imported must necessarily vary largely from year to year; and this whatever may be your legislation; for these fluctuations are dependent on the seasons, over which you have no control. You may provide by legislation that on an average a larger or a smaller portion of your supply shall be drawn from abroad; but whether you have a sliding scale, or a fixed duty, or no duty at all, the annual amount of import must greatly vary. In a bad year you will import more; in a good year less, whatever be the state of your law. But looking at the tables which have been laid before your Lordships, I find that, speaking of wheat alone (and I shall confine myself throughout to wheat, and not weary your Lordships with unnecessary details with regard to other grain, the principle being the same in all) in the course of these last twenty years we have imported 21,432,000 quarters of wheat. The yearly average for the last twenty years amounts to 1,071,000 quarters; for the last three years, to 741,000 quarters; and in the course of the last year it was 308,000 quarters. Has this result, I would ask, been produced by any increased price of wheat at home? A great number of fallacies have been made

use of, and statements attributed to us, who defend this Corn Law, which we never uttered. We are constantly told that the intention of this Corn Law was to guarantee to the farmer the price of 55s. a quarter. The intention of the Corn Law was no such thing. My Right Hon. Friend, in introducing the measure, stated that if, by legislation, he could fix the average price of corn, he would fix it from 54s. to 58s. The avowed object of the Corn Law, therefore, was this, that when the price is above 58s. the consumer should be protected by a large influx of foreign corn; and that when the price is below 54s., the producer should be protected against any other competition than that which he can engage with upon equal terms—namely, competition with those who are exposed to the same vicissitudes of the same climate, and who have the same advantages, and are subject to the same burdens and restrictions with himself. What has been the result of the Corn Law as far as the consumer is concerned? I find that the average price of wheat for the last twenty years has been 57s. 4d. a quarter whilst the average price for the last three years, since the Corn Law passed, has only been 50s. 9d., and the price last year, which we have been told was a period of great scarcity, was 50s. 10d. My Right Hon. Friend stated his wish to keep the price between 54s. and 58s., and since the passing of the bill the annual average price has not risen above 50s. 9d. or 50s. 10d. But a return laid before the House of Commons gives a more accurate test of the operations of the sliding scale, and of the manner in which it acts to check the tendency to a rise of price whenever that tendency is exhibited. The paper I allude to is a return of the weekly price of corn in every week from March, 1844, to March, 1846; and with respect to those 104 weeks, the result was that the price has been between 54s. and 58s., in no less than forty-three of those weeks; the price has been below 54s. in fifty-four other weeks; the price has been above 58s. in seven weeks only, and the price has never risen in any one week above 59s. (hear, hear). So far, therefore, as concerns the consumer, has he any right to say that Corn Law has deceived any expectations he had a right to form of it? (hear, hear.) Now, although it is quite true that the prices of corn have fallen considerably below that which was anticipated by my Right Hon. Friend, if we look to the total amount imported since the great influx of 2,500,000 quarters immediately after the passing of that measure, we shall find that of 2,000,000 quarters which have come in since that time, there have been entered under 55s., only 305,000 quarters; between 55s. and 59s. the actual point at which we desired to limit it by the bill—1,475,000 quarters; and between 59s. and 62s., 261,000 quarters (hear, hear). I conceive, therefore, the law has operated in the manner and nearly to the extent it was expected to operate (cheers). Another great and important point respects the fluctuation in the price of corn. Since this Corn Law passed, the fluctuation of price which has taken place between 1844 and 1846 is only from 58s. 4d. down to 45s. 2d. The whole difference between the highest week and the lowest week in those two years, is not a difference of 30 per cent. The greatest weekly fluctuation in the price, between any one week and the succeeding, is 1s. 6d., and the greatest fluctuation in any period for the

whole four weeks of the month is a fluctuation of 4s., and no more (hear, hear). When this corn bill was introduced in 1842, I recollect it being put forward as a matter of boast, that the Corn Laws as they then stood had produced only a fluctuation of 49 per cent. in any one year, while the existing Corn Law has produced only a fluctuation of 30 per cent. in two years. But let us look to the fluctuation of price in other countries, from the month of December 1844, to December, 1845. Observe, that in two years the total amount of our fluctuation has been 30 per cent., while in that one year the fluctuation at Dantzic was 56 per cent.; at Hamburg, 86; at Rostock, 78; at Stettin, 84; at Odessa, 50; and at Alexandria, 54 (hear, hear). Perhaps you may tell me, that this is the effect of our own sliding scale, and of our Corn Law operating upon prices abroad. Then I will refer you to America. In 1842, my Right Hon. Friend the Secretary for the Colonies moved for a return of the maximum fluctuation of price in the markets of America, from 1834 to 1840, and according to that return, the greatest fluctuation in any one year, was, in New York, 70 per cent.; in Philadelphia, 76; in Portsmouth, 72; and in New Norfolk, 62. The account of these fluctuations has been carried down to the present time, and between the years 1841 and 1846 (whilst our fluctuation never exceeded 30 per cent. between 1844 and 1845, and whilst in the market of Montreal, which ought, if the argument of my opponents is just, to have been the most affected by our Corn Laws, the fluctuation did not exceed 17 per cent. on the price of last year). I find in New York in one year, a fluctuation of 51 per cent.; in Philadelphia, 50; in Richmond, 76; and in Baltimore, 90. As far, then, as the experience of three years has gone, no law in this or any other country has produced so great a steadiness of price with cheapness as the law of 1842, which your Lordships are now called on to abandon (hear, hear). But if your Lordships wish to refer to a period of the greatest fluctuation in this country, refer to the period between 1792 and 1805, a period when there was the greatest dependence on the foreigner. Hear, on this subject, the evidence of Mr. Malthus, in a pamphlet written by him in the year 1814. He says—"During the last century, the period of our greatest importation and dependence on foreign corn was between 1792 and 1805, and certainly in no four years of the whole one hundred was the fluctuation so great. In 1792 the price was 42s.; in 1796, it was 77s.; in 1801, it was 118s.; and in 1803, 56s. (hear, hear.) So that between 1792 and 1801 the price was almost tripled; and in the short period between 1798 and 1803 it rose from 50s. to 118s., and fell again to 56s. and that in that period of the history of this country in which we were most dependent on foreign supply (cheers). If it were necessary to prolong the discussion on this point, I would ask your Lordships to look to the fluctuations of price in other articles. You are told that the fluctuations in the price of corn are attributable to the sliding scale. Look to the fluctuations in the price of potatoes. There is no sliding scale as respects them; but there is Free Trade. They may be imported from anywhere, and they pay no duty. Yet I know that the price of potatoes varies from 100 to 150 per cent. in the course of a single year (hear, hear). Then, again, look at the

price of upland cotton. No sliding scale affects it, and the demand is regular and steady. Yet if you look at the price of upland cotton at Liverpool, in 1836, 1837, and 1838, you will find that it was in January, 1836, 8½d. per lb.; in March, 11½d.; in January, 1837, 9½d.; in May, 5½d.; in December, 8½d.; and in April, 1838, 5d. I ask, is there any fluctuation in corn to be compared with this? (hear, hear). Now, I trust, I shall be excused for adverting to another point of importance, namely, the supply which our Corn Laws procure for us, and keep on hand to meet possible emergencies. I will recall to your Lordships' recollection what was the state of the different countries of Europe at the commencement of the present year. There existed a great apprehension of scarcity among all, and measures were taken for their own protection and security, and that I may not be supposed to misrepresent in the slightest degree the facts of the case, I will read from a statement made by my Right Honourable Friend the First Lord of the Treasury. After stating the apprehensions of scarcity felt by various Foreign Powers, my Right Honourable Friend goes on,—"From Belgium, dated the 24th September, we heard that the Chambers had sanctioned the proposal of the Government to prohibit export, and permit import. Egypt, on the 22nd of October, prohibited the exportation of all corn arriving at Alexandria after that day. Turkey prohibited the export of all grain from the ports of Anatolia and her Asiatic provinces from the 27th of August, 1845, to harvest-time in 1846. Sweden prohibited the export of potatoes from the 15th of October till the next harvest. There was, indeed, at this period, a general apprehension of a scarcity of provisions, extending from Sweden to Egypt, and from Riga to Turkey, and measures were taken to stop their exportation, and for excluding us from some of our usual sources of supply." This shows that the moment a pressure takes place measures are taken by these parties to stop the exportation of food, and deprive us of the opportunity of obtaining it from them. We were also told to stop the export of provisions, to take off the duty on import, to prohibit the use of grain in distilleries. We took none of those steps. We trusted to the operation, the steady, quiet, certain operation of our existing Corn Law. I believe that the best test of scarcity is to be found not in the report of learned professors (hear, and a laugh); but that there is a much better barometer as to that point, and that is, the price of food in the market (cheers). The self-acting operation of the Corn Law did not come into effect, and because it did not, its authors said that it was a sliding scale that would not slide (hear, hear). Of course it would not, and for this good reason, because there was not a deficiency in the country to increase the price (cheers). By relying on the operation of the Corn Laws what was the result? What was the amount of corn in bond at the close of the year 1845, to meet the exigencies of our demand? I am not talking of the amount in bond now which has most unfortunately accumulated in consequence of the introduction of this measure; and which may now come in with a ruinous effect on the market (hear, hear). I am speaking of the amount which your Corn Laws provided in bond at a time of universal scarcity. The average

quantity in bond in December for the last twenty years has been 445,000 quarters; and the highest amount in bond in December in any previous year was 899,000 quarters. But in December last, in face of the difficulties in Europe, in face of the established prohibition of export, you had in bond in waiting for an exigency that did not come, 1,106,000 quarters (cheers). Will any man, then, tell me that the Corn Law has failed in the essential points of keeping us, in the main, independent of foreign supply, in securing cheapness and steadiness of price, and in providing for us an abundant foreign supply in case we should require to make up any deficiency in this country (cheers)? Will any man seriously contend that this great advantage resulting from the Corn Law has been purchased by the sacrifice of commercial interest? Is there any man who does not know the enormous and unparalleled strides which this country has made in commercial and manufacturing industry, I do not say on account of, but I will say notwithstanding, the operation of the Corn Laws? Since 1827, the exports of this country have increased from £36,000,000 in value to £58,500,000; and in the course of those years the import of cotton alone has increased from 177,000,000 lbs. to 721,000,000 lbs. In the course of the period since 1814, while the value of landed property, as shown by the property tax paid in respect of schedule A, has increased from £39,300,000 to £45,750,000, being an increase of about 16 per cent.; the increase on schedule D, showing the profits of trade, manufactures, and professions, has increased from £35,800,000, in 1814, to £64,344,000, in 1842, being an increase of no less than 84 per cent., against 16 per cent. increase in the value of land (hear). Have, then, these Corn Laws been inconsistent with manufacturing prosperity? and why are we now invited to enter upon this great experiment (hear, hear)? It is for the purpose, I suppose, of still further expanding the manufacturing activity of the country. I belong to a manufacturing county, and no man is less inclined than myself to depreciate the great advantages derived from the manufactures of this country, the great increase they have caused in the wealth of the nation, and in many cases the addition they have given to the comfort of the labouring classes. But this system of manufacturing activity is not without its attendant drawbacks and dangers. It is a system which requires to be steadily and carefully watched rather than to be unduly pampered and fostered. Manufacturing industry is subject to constant, great, and rapid fluctuations. Its powers of production are always overtaking the powers of consumption. A period of prosperity is invariably followed by the glutting of every market in the world, and by a corresponding period of adversity. Do nothing, for God's sake, to check the prosperity of manufactures, but do not be led by unwise legislation to promote and pamper an unwholesome increase, which when the bubble bursts involves all in serious evils (hear, hear). But if it is certain that the increase and extension of manufactures are desirable, it is not clear to my mind that the repeal of the Corn Laws would have the effect of increasing manufacturing industry. If there be no great reduction in the price of corn in consequence of this measure, it needs no demonstration to show that there will be no largely increased consumption of corn; and if there

should be no great increase in the consumption of corn, the consequence is, that there will be a transfer of business, to the same and no greater extent, from customers in this country to customers abroad, and that would be all. Are we to believe the argument of the successful operation of the tariff? We are told that the price of wool has risen, and also of timber, silk, butchers' meat, and I know not what besides. I must say, however, that of all the bold paradoxes ever palmed on the credulity of mankind, and passed, upon the authority of great names, for sovereign and supreme wisdom, the boldest and the most laughable is this—that increased competition tends to raise the price of those articles which are the subjects of it (hear, hear). Reason is against it; and more, facts are against it. True, the reduction of a halfpenny per pound on wool last year, taking place at a thriving period of your manufactures, did not check consumption; the demand for the article went on increasing more than the supply, and the fall was not felt. But what happened in 1825, when Mr. Huskisson reduced the price 6d. per lb.? My Noble Friend on the cross benches recollects that Mr. Huskisson reduced the duty from 6d. to 1d.; and that, while from 1819 to 1824 the average price of Southdown wool was 1s. 4d., it was from 1825 to 1830 only 10d., being a reduction to the full amount of the duty (hear, hear). If you talk of silk—I will not enter into the details of the silk trade—but admitting for the sake of argument, what I think not quite clear, that the silk manufacture is in a better state than it would have been under a system of greater protection, this fact is notorious, that, simultaneously with the removal of the prohibition from the manufactured article, you largely reduced the duty charged upon the raw material; and your Lordships must allow me to remind you, moreover, that after the prohibition was removed, the silk manufacture of this country was, and has been to the present moment, protected by a duty averaging no less than 30 per cent. on the price of the article. I need not ask you about timber. It is quite true the price of Baltic timber has not fallen to the full extent of the reduction of the duty, though I believe, the price of Canadian timber has; but what has been the effect on the price of the article in this country? (hear, hear). I hold in my hand a return showing the money price for 50 cubic feet of timber for three years previous to the tariff, showing a mean price of 103s. 9d.; while since the tariff the mean price is 91s. 3d., and last year only 86s. 8d. I will not enter upon the question as to the rise in price of butcher's meat, or the various causes which have led to that increase. Your Lordships are well aware of the deficiency of the home supply, and of the causes of that deficiency; a deficiency which has not been in any sensible degree counterbalanced by the comparatively trifling importations from abroad. I find the total amount of sheep imported has been 7,113; and I find that in one single market, in Smithfield, the falling off was from 27,370 in the week ending the 14th April, 1845, to 16,240 on the 13th April, 1846. Here, my Lords, is the explanation, and a very sufficient explanation, of the rise in butcher's meat, not on account of, but notwithstanding, the limited operation of the tariff (hear, hear). I contend that, under this proposed

abrogation of law, there will be a large reduction of corn. But before I leave the question of the effect of the bill in December I be permitted to refer for a moment to the effect of the bill last year, which had upon British shipping. Great stress has been laid upon this point. Prices were to fall, but the tariff was to have the effect of immensely increasing our commercial activity in the employment of British shipping. A great deal has been said of the increase in the amount of our shipping employed between 1842 and 1845. But, my Lords, how does this case stand with reference to the tariff—to which I was a consenting party, because I thought it would have a tendency to settle prices when there was a tendency to extravagant prices; and because I thought it would tend, moreover, to expose the home grower to such an amount of competition (and no more) as he could fairly and safely meet. The principle of the tariff was protection, and not prohibition (hear, hear). The principle of the tariff was competition; but my notion of competition is this—that you must have the competing parties placed upon an equality to start from, and that unless you have this equality of circumstances in the competing parties, your principle of Free Trade may turn out to be the most rank and entire monopoly (hear, hear). Now, what has been the increase of British shipping employed under the new tariff? The tonnage of vessels belonging to different ports of the British empire in 1842, was 3,619,000 tons; in 1844, it was 3,636,000 tons; showing in two years an increase of 17,000 tons. Now, since 1833, there has been a progressive annual increase in the amount of your shipping tonnage each year, with one exception, surpassing the year preceding. The total amount of that increase has been 985,000 tons, and the average biennial increase 197,000 tons. But the increase in the two years since the adoption of the tariff has been 17,000. Is that all? (hear, hear). Now I will show you a branch of the shipping trade of this country in which there has been a large increase, and which compensates for the very large deficiency which would otherwise have been presented in the last two or three years—a branch certainly for which the tariff can take no credit, and which depends, and has depended, upon the prosperity of agriculture, and the agricultural improvements encouraged by the system of protection. I refer to the number of ships engaged in the guano trade in the years 1843 and 1845. You may smile, and think this an inconsiderable branch of trade; but what has been the increase in the tonnage and number of ships employed in it? That trade commenced in 1841. In 1843, the tonnage of British ships engaged in the guano trade was 4056 tons, and it afforded employment to 202 seamen. In 1845, British shipping of the tonnage of 219,000 tons, and 11,434 British seamen were engaged in the trade. There was, therefore, an increase of above 200,000 tons of shipping in the guano trade alone, to set against an increase in our whole commercial marine of 17,000 tons since the tariff was adopted (hear, hear). Now, I contend that, under the proposed law, there will be a considerable fall in the price of corn, though not equal to the reduction of the duty. I do not think it is very difficult to estimate at what price we may expect to have a large quantity of foreign wheat brought into this country under the bill now

should be no great in-ound my calculation on the prices at Dantzic quence is, that the-ere. We are now called upon to legislate on the no greater ext-ue tariff. I find that, at a price of 55s., we had, as abroad-pected, a very large importation of foreign corn. Now, at of ths the duty is 15s. We had then a large importation of corn, t pri-izing to the importer something below 40s., a quarter. We th may, therefore, fairly anticipate that when the duty is taken off, we shall have a large importation of corn at 40s., inundating our my markets, and making 40s. a quarter pretty nearly the maximum ucl price you can ever expect to realize (hear). I fear, my Lords, I am en troubling you at too great length (cheers). I am ashamed to do so ; but this is a great question (renewed cheers). I feel that I am r arguing it very imperfectly and feebly, but I trust your Lordships will bear with me for a few moments (cheers). I this morning received a letter from a gentleman, who describes himself to be the head of the oldest firm engaged in the corn trade in Liverpool. He writes as follows :—"I beg to inform your Lordship, that I hold in bond two cargoes of fair red wheat, which were imported early last year from Ibraila, on the Danube, at a cost of 14s. per quarter free on board ship, the freight to Liverpool being 9s. 6d. per quarter, and I do not hesitate to give it as my deliberate opinion, that if the measure now before your lordships' house be suffered to become law, we shall, after the expiration of three years, be annually in the receipt of five millions of quarters of foreign wheat and flour (probably more), provided the seasons be ordinarily favourable, and our average prices admit of the sale of it at not less than 36s. to 40s. per quarter gross in England, the duty being 1s. per quarter as proposed." Between September 1844, and May 1845, during the whole of which time the price was permanently from 45s. to 46s., and the duty 20s.; there were entered for home consumption 120,000 quarters of wheat, which consequently, realized to the importers from 25s. to 26s. a quarter. But I am not absurd enough to suppose that if the duty had been taken off, because these parties could afford to import and sell corn at from 25s. to 26s., therefore they would have done so. These parties would have derived very large profits from their importation; and what would have been the result? (hear, hear). There are many districts of country on the continent, larger, perhaps, than many of your Lordships imagine, which might be devoted to the growth of corn. Look, for example, at the plains of Hungary. There you have very considerable districts admirably qualified for the growth of wheat, to the cultivation of the opening of which your markets will give great encouragement. But even supposing that no great addition be made to the area of the corn-exporting countries, there can be no doubt that the application of skill and capital to the improved cultivation of the land, would give to the cultivator a far greater amount of produce from the present area than it now yields. Your calumniated and ill-treated farmers can produce about 28 bushels to the acre; in hardly any other country is the produce more than 14 bushels to the acre (hear). A large profit is derived by the importers from these countries. This tends to the application of capital to the improvement of the soil. The continued application of capital and skill

enables the cultivator to produce his corn much more cheaply, and the same effect will be produced by the application of capital to improve and facilitate the means of shipment. My objections to this measure, therefore, are not lessened but rather aggravated by the fact that you will not feel the injury it entails all at once, but that, gradually and progressively, the importation of a larger and larger amount of foreign supply will be encouraged by your legislation, and will by degrees drive out of cultivation a larger and larger amount of corn land in this country (hear, hear). But it is said, that when the price of corn falls, the manufacturers will obtain a great outlet for their goods, and will be able to sell them at a much cheaper rate. But how are they to sell them more cheaply than at present? How is this cheapness to be effected? If it is to be effected at all, it will be effected by a reduction of wages (loud cries of "hear"). It is of vast importance to the labouring population that the price of corn should be steady, be it high or be it low. The labourer, where prices are low, has not the prudence or foresight to economize his earnings, and when the pendulum swings the other way he is too often plunged into a state of distress. It is then in the absence of fluctuation from one extreme to another, and not on the average money-rate of wages, that the comforts of the labourer mainly depends. If, however, the labourer's money-wages are to be reduced, he ought, I think, to have fairly stated the balance of advantage and disadvantage to which he is about to be exposed under this system. Take the case of a man with a wife and family of three children in the manufacturing districts. I will make a large allowance, and suppose that they consume five quarters of wheat in the course of a year. I will assume that there is a permanent fall of 10s. in the price of wheat. A diminution of 1s. per week from the wages of any one member of that family, (and you can hardly suppose that any diminution would be less than that) more than counterbalances all the advantages he and his family could derive from a reduction of 50s. in the price of the five quarters of corn they consume (hear, hear). But, then, we are told that, even if manufactures do not become cheaper, trade will increase largely, from the necessity, on the part of foreign countries, of taking our goods in exchange for their produce. This argument assumes that Russia, Prussia, and the United States, do not take our manufactures because we refuse to receive their corn in exchange. There never was argument less founded on fact than that. The fact is, with regard to all those countries, that at the present moment our imports from them largely preponderate over our exports to them, and the duties we impose upon their goods—aye, even upon corn and timber, are far lower than the average amount of duties which all those countries charge upon the principal articles of our manufacture which we export to them. Take the case of our trade with the United States. You may perhaps be surprised to learn that the value of the cotton alone which we take from the United States in the course of a single year, far exceeds the value of all the goods put together which we export to the United States in the same period. For a period of five years, the average value of our imports to the United States has been £5,700,000 a-year. For a period of eighteen years it has averaged

about £7,000,000 a-year. Now, assuming that we take four-fifths of our whole supply of cotton from the United States, and that that cotton is worth 4d. per lb. (a low average), our imports of cotton alone from the United States have amounted in those five years to £39,087,000, or an average of £7,817,000 per annum. Since 1827 our imports of cotton have increased from 177,000,000 lbs. to 721,000,000 lbs., while our exports during the same period have remained stationary. I may refer on this point to an authority which would not be disputed, that of the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, the fact that during the last six years the average value of the imports into the United States from British possessions had been 253,000,000 of dollars. The value of the exports from the United States to this country, and to British possessions during the same period, had been 354,000,000 of dollars, leaving a balance of 101,000,000 of dollars in favour of the United States. "This," the Secretary observes, "is the nominal balance, but there should be about twenty-five per cent. at least, added to this, to make up the real balance. The exports are made up according to the home valuation, and the returns from the shipments would, of course, be increased by any profits that may be realized in foreign countries. There has been a balance in our favour in each of the past six years, and, with one exception (1839), in each of the past nine years. It appears by these statements that our foreign trade is yearly becoming more profitable to the United States. Our export trade is annually increasing, while our imports remain about the same. Any modification made in the Corn Laws of Great Britain, permitting the introduction, on reasonable terms, of our bread stuffs, will give an additional impetus to our export trade, and prove of immense advantage to the producers of this country, by giving an outlet for our surplus produce. On the other hand,"—well, what? of course the writer goes on to expatiate on the great benefits arising from a mutual interchange of commodities, on the large influx of British manufactures, on the blessed effects of this increased commerce upon the friendly relations subsisting between the two powers (a laugh). He refers to the indissoluble links in which we are bound by commercial advantages, and he seems ready to congratulate us and his countrymen that the little cloud in the West seems to have passed away (a laugh). Not at all—"on the other hand," the Secretary goes on to say, "every improvement or increase made in our manufacturing establishment serves to supply the home demand for cotton and woollen manufactures, and tends to reduce the importation of these articles" (hear, hear). This, then, is to be the result of a liberal measure for allowing the importation of bread stuffs from the United States. If you flatter yourselves that by such a measure you will gain any advantage for your manufactures, undeceive yourselves; the Secretary to the Treasury of the United States tells you that they will soon be able to dispense with your assistance, and that they will not require your manufactures. Then with regard to Russia, Mr. M'Gregor states, that in 1838, the total exports of that empire were valued at £11,996,000, of which £6,977,000 were imported to Great Britain. The average value of the exports from Great Britain to Russia is £1,633,000,

leaving a balance of £5,300,000 in favour of Russia. The declared value of our exports to Prussia is £505,000, and the estimated value of our imports is £3,138,000! You talk about a duty of 25, 30, or 50 per cent. upon timber as an extravagant and prohibitory duty. By the United States' tariff, the duty upon our woollens and silks is 40 per cent., upon our cotton, ale, and porter, 50 per cent.; upon coals, 60 per cent.; and upon paper, 75 per cent.; and their duties upon various other articles of our manufacture, which are principally articles of export, range from 45 to 150 per cent., and upon glass amount to 243 per cent. But the tariffs of Russia and Prussia are equally restrictive. "Russia," says Mr. M'Gregor, "may be said to prohibit the importation of every material which can be drawn, by the labour of her serfs, from her mines and forests; and of every foreign manufactured article, in order that the labour of these serfs, with the aid of machinery either imported or made in the country, and directed by skilful foreign artisans, shall be made to produce articles either similar to, or that may be substituted for, those of foreign manufacture." Those articles of your manufacture, the importation of which is not prohibited by Russia, are subjected to an average duty of 65 per cent., ranging upon some articles, for instance glass, to 900 per cent. Prussia imposes a duty varying from 50 to 130 per cent. And yet the argument is boldly put forward, that it is our protective system, imposing, as it does, a duty of about 25 per cent. upon the importation of corn, which prevents us from receiving the produce of those countries which levy a duty of 60, 70, or 100 per cent. upon our manufactures. In 1839, Dr. Bowring, who was employed by the then Secretary of State in prosecuting some inquiries on this subject, reports as follows:—"August 7, 1839. I have put prominently forward the subject of cotton and woollen manufactures; I have been asked what we were disposed to do, and have mentioned that the question of the timber duties might be opened, and any other minor subject interesting to the Prussian Government. On these grounds they are willing to treat. Prussia will propose and support a general reduction of the duty on cotton fabrics; she will also recommend a new classification of woollens, so that the duty shall press less heavily on the lower qualities; the extent of the reduction will depend on the powers which England has of meeting her, and on this point I hope your Lordship will favour me with early instructions." And again the same year: "It is clear, however, that the amount of changes to be obtained here is wholly dependent upon the views and the powers of the Government at home, and to our own legislation. I have put forward the points which interest us most, viz.:—reductions on the duties on cottons, woollens, hardware, and pottery. The general reply is, that Prussia will recommend diminished duties on these articles, and will try to give effect to her recommendations, if we can obtain liberal modifications of the corn and timber duties in Great Britain. I have explained all the difficulties of these questions, but still am very anxious to obtain from the Prussian Government specific declarations that if such and such changes take place in England, they will be met by such and such changes here. The head of the customs says they will entertain a proposal for a general reduction of the

duties on cottons, and for a classification of the duties on woollens, so as to relieve the lower qualities of the prohibition which the system of taking the duties by weight brings with it, and for lowering of the duties on hardware, and pottery; the groundwork of the understanding to be, that so much shall be deducted if the duties on timber are lowered so much, and so much more if a fixed duty be laid on wheat, instead of the present fluctuating scale. I have not found any of the authorities here expecting the introduction of their corn into England, duty free." Well, my Lords, we have reduced the duty on timber "so much," and we are about to do, with respect to corn, more than any of the Prussian authorities ventured to expect: and now let me ask my Noble Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, how much has Prussia done, and how much does he expect she will do, in reference to our cottons, woollens, hardware, and pottery? What has been the effect of the reductions we have already made in the duty on timber, with regard to our exports of cotton to the northern states of Europe? Since 1841, our imports of timber have increased from 351,000 loads to 642,000 loads. Now in 1843, we exported to Russia, Prussia, Denmark, and Sweden, 2,200,000 yards of plain cotton; now we export only 2,000,000. We then exported 1,200,000 yards of printed cottons; now we export only 970,000 yards. Your imports of timber have nearly doubled, but your exports to these people, in spite of Dr. Bowring's prediction, have fallen off instead of increasing. I suppose, at all events, that your shipping trade has improved. I have been told that British merchants will not engage in the corn trade because it is speculative. Speculation is the basis of all trade. Take off what duties you please, the corn trade must be eminently speculative, because it is dependent upon the seasons and the probable demand in this country. But it is said, our merchants are too wise to engage in these speculations (hear, and a laugh). It is said, they are unsuited to the character of the British nation. It is said that hazardous speculations, leading possibly to great risk, and possibly to great gain, are so adverse to the character of the people of this country (laughter) that it is not likely any great number of persons would engage in them. And this is said in the year 1846! Well, but the timber trade is not a speculative trade. We have opened that trade. Our shipping, of course, have entered largely into that trade. Listen to a fact which is of great importance. In 1839 the Baltic trade employed 612 British ships against 566 foreign ships. In 1845 it employed 609 British ships against 1845 foreigners (hear, hear). In 1839 there were 145,000 tons British employed against a nearly equal amount of foreign tonnage; in 1845 there were only 133,000 tons British against 378,000 tons foreign (hear, hear). In 1839 there were 6,016 British seamen employed, against 6,300 foreign seamen; in 1845 there were 5,375 British seamen employed, against 17,169 foreigners (cheers.) But even if I were to admit that you might produce a large increase in your manufactures for a time, under a system of Free Trade, that you might puff up your manufactures with a brief but extraordinary prosperity; when that fails, as it will fail—when the day of difficulty and distress comes—when war intervenes! I

think my Right Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for <sup>decl</sup> Foreign Affairs would feel much more easy, in the event of a war with the United States, (which God forbid !) if, instead of drawing four-fifths of our cotton from the United States, we drew four-fifths of it from our own territories. But, when war comes, these markets will be closed against you. You will have destroyed the home market, and when you have destroyed the home market, and the foreign market fails you, then comes the period of depression; then come the bitter sufferings of the manufacturers; then comes the bitter feeling of re-action against those who are now deluding their unhappy dupes with the prospect of cheap wages and of cheap bread (cheers). Now, my Lords, I have spoken of the home market. Don't let your Lordships, and don't let the country, undervalue the importance of the home market. If you were to believe certain cotton manufacturers—if you were to believe what has been put forward in another place—you would believe that seven-eighths of the whole quantity of cotton goods are exported, and that the consumption of cotton goods among the population of this country amounts to little more than 2s. per head. Your Lordships will judge of the accuracy of that statement, when I tell you that in 1840 the consumption of the West Indies was, not 2s. per head, but £1 6s. per head of the population (hear, hear). I cannot believe, that when the West Indies consume £1 6s. per head of your cotton goods, the population of this country consume only 2s. per head. Now, I don't hesitate to state my conviction that the home market of this country is to the foreign as 40 to 17. In the year 1820 there were exported 248,000 yards of cotton made up into goods. In 1844 that quantity was increased to 1,046,000 yards, or nearly fourfold; but in consequence of the immense fall in price that fourfold increase in quantity produced an increase of only one-fourth in the value. The value was £17,612,000 against £13,000,000 in the former year. In 1823, Mr. Huskisson estimated the value of the cotton goods consumed in England at £32,000,000; and I find that the home consumption, deducting all that had been exported, was 73,000,000 of lbs. weight in the year 1820, and that it had increased to 280,000,000 of lbs. weight worked up for goods, employing British labour, and paid by British consumers, in 1843 (cheers). Allowing that there has been a proportionate reduction in the price of articles of home consumption, that the increase, therefore, of four-fold amount has been only one-fourth in value, your whole consumption in 1843 was worth—and it is much more now—£40,000,000 sterling, against an export of cotton goods to the value of £17,612,000. £40,000,000 is a low estimate for the amount of cotton goods worked up and consumed in this country; and if I take the great articles of produce of this country—cotton, woollen, linen, silk, coals and culm, iron, hardware, brass, copper, leather, saddlery, cabinet wares, and papers—of which the exports amount in value to £48,344,000, at a low estimate the total amount produced is £250,000,000, thus leaving nearly £200,000,000 out of the £250,000,000 for the consumption of the home market (cheers). Now, my Lords, that is the market you are now called upon to endanger; these are the customers you are about to sacrifice in

your blind zeal to promote the export trade by your "cheap bread," and the importation of foreign corn. But then I am told by the manufacturers, "Surely a reduction in the price of corn will necessarily cause an increase in the consumption." That is not quite so clear. There may be a diminution in the price of corn, but cheapness and dearness, my Lords, are relative terms; they are not positive terms. An article may be cheap in point of money cost, but very dear in point of ability on the part of the consumer to purchase (hear). Wheat is cheaper in Ireland than in England—cheaper in Poland than in Ireland; but wheat is not more within the reach of the population of Poland than of the population of England, and, paying an infinitely higher price for articles of consumption, the ability of the consumer to purchase makes the articles virtually cheaper—that is to say, more within his reach; and he is, therefore, able to consume more of them. Therefore it does not follow because you reduce the price of corn, and thereby diminish the cost of your manufactures, that you increase the consumption of manufactures, and that, therefore, your home consumers will be able to take a larger, or even the same amount as at present. I have gone over a great part of this question, and I know how I have trespassed upon your attention (cheers). I come now to the question, "Upon whom will this loss fall?" I saw lately in one of the French newspapers an article upon the probable effect of the destruction of the Corn Law, and there was this philosophical argument made use of:—"Quand même ces millionnaires d'Anglais perdraient le quart de leurs revenus, ils n'en jouiraient pas moins des douceurs de la vie" (laughter). Now, I, for my part, am not satisfied to have one-fourth of our incomes taken away, though we may have some of "the sweets of life" remaining (hear, hear, and laughter). Something has been said, in language unfairly and unjustly misapprehended—something has been said about the difficulty of administering the affairs of the Government, and reconciling the conflicting claims of "an ancient monarchy, a proud aristocracy, and a Reformed House of Commons" (hear, hear). Now, my Lords, I entirely put by the erroneous interpretation given to that expression. I admit the sentiment, I admit the difficulty, and I admit further than that; I admit further, that you are bound not to legislate for a class. You are not to legislate for the interest of one class against the interest of another; but this I say, that if you materially alter the social relations of the different classes of the community in this country—if you lower one at the expence of another, it is not a private injustice, but a public injury that you inflict upon society; and whatever may be the difficulty of keeping the balance between the "ancient monarchy," the "proud aristocracy," and the "Reformed House of Commons," rely upon it, my Lords, the difficulty will not be less, if for "a proud"—in the proper sense of the word—you substitute a "pauper and dependent aristocracy" (cheers). And if you do, rely upon it, you break down in that "proud aristocracy," the firmest breakwater and the safest barrier between that limited monarchy and that spirit of democracy which is fitly represented in the reformed House of Commons (loud cheers). Do not mistake me when I speak of the

aristocracy. I do not speak exclusively, I do not speak <sup>exclusively</sup> of that body which I have now the honour to address. I speak of the Lords, of the great body of landed proprietors of this country, who speak of men unennobled by rank, and many of them undistinguished by great wealth, but who, and their ancestors before them, for 11 generations after generations, have been the centre each of his respect and locality—who have the *prestige* of old associations attached to their names; who conduct the business of their respective counties; who exercise the opinions and feelings of their respective neighbourhoods; who exercise a modest and a decent hospitality, and preside over an antrv who have hereditary claims upon their consideration and affections. My Lords, these are the aristocracy of this country, to whom I allude (cheers). Reduce these men, and you inflict an irretrievable and irreparable injury upon the country. Lower them in the scale, and you have deranged the social machine beyond the power of correction. God forbid that the successful manufacturer or that the princely merchant should not take his place among the landed aristocracy of this country. Such infusions add fresh vigour and power to that class of the community; but depend upon it, if you sweep that class away at once with all the associations attached to their names, their families, their histories, and the previous associations which belong to the character of their families, and substitute a new body of capitalists, to come amidst an unattached tenantry, and a neighbourhood where no associations are connected with their names, the moral effect of the loss of that influence will be irretrievable (loud cheers). I say I should not be satisfied if I were to believe that the loss would mainly fall upon the proprietors of this country, but I am satisfied that there never was so great a delusion as this. Why, a reduction of 10s. a quarter on wheat is equivalent to a reduction of 40s. an acre on a great portion of the wheat lands of this country, and accompanied by a corresponding reduction in the price of other articles that will go far to eat up the whole rental of the landed proprietor. My Noble Friend on the cross benches most ably argued this part of the case, and I will not therefore dwell at any great length upon it. The fact is, that the loss will fall—aye, and they know it will fall—they showed by their feelings the other day that it will fall, not mainly on the landlords, but on the tenant-farmers (hear, hear). The first step these tenant-farmers will take to relieve themselves will be to suspend improvements—will be to discharge the labourers (hear, hear)—will be to reduce wages—will be to drive those unhappy labourers into the manufacturing districts, to enter into hopeless competition there for the lowest class of employment in manufacturing labour, carrying their own wretchedness to pine away in the manufacturing towns, adding to the already grievous competition for employment, and thus pressing down the wages of the manufacturing operatives, as well as those of agricultural labourers. What would be the consequences to the landed proprietors of the country? I will assume even the case of one unencumbered by any debt, and whose income is entirely clear, though I fear such cases are the exception rather than the rule. But what is the first thing he does? He dismisses a certain portion of his establishment. It is no great sacrifice of real comfort to him, but it turns into the

your bli-market a great number of competitors for labour whom his and the has employed ; and, mind you, whatever else may be said manust the landed proprietors of the country, I do not think that it sarilybe charged against them that they are a class of men accumula-clear, and hoarding wealth, and not spending their incomes at least as ness as they receive them. Well, then, they reduce the employment. positionow mind what we are told, "True, but you may make up any but veo yourselves You have only to act up to the real principles of purchaTrade." Well, what are these real principles of Free Trade ? cheap are to dismiss every useless and unprofitable hand. They are the employ no men beyond those who are absolutely required to make E, profit for themselves (hear, hear). They are to have no consideration whatever for the tenants who may have been upon the land for fifty years. No ; it is more profitable to have one large farm than three small ones. Pull down two or three houses of human beings and establish one great farm—it is cheaper, and will keep up your rents. Your new tenants have capital, the others have none—let them go and starve (hear, hear). There are not above 600,000 tenants whose holdings are under £200 a-year—at least there were not in 1814. Do not stop at such a "drop in the ocean" as that. Turn them adrift ; bring new tenants from a distance, from the Anti-Corn Law League, place them on large farms, encourage them to spend capital, and then you will be able to recover all the injurious effects of a fall in the price of corn ; that is, if the law do not prohibit it. But, my Lords, the law imposes upon you the burden, even if your own feelings would not revolt at such a system—the law imposes upon you the burden of maintaining all the poor. But I have too good an opinion of the landlords of England to believe that they would act on such principles (cheers). I believe that to the extent of their ability they would go on giving the utmost amount of employment that they could. I believe they know that they have to deal, not with stocks and stones, but with men, human beings, with the same feelings, the same attachments, and the same affections as themselves. And I do not believe that, under the pressure of the greatest difficulty, the landlords of England, as a body would adopt for their own protection the cold, and selfish, and calculating doctrines of political economy and Free Trade (loud cheers). But, my Lords, if this system is to be adopted in England—if you venture to recommend this system in England, will you dare to advise that it should be carried into execution in Ireland ? In Ireland the bulk of the population are small farmers, holding farms which vary from one to twelve acres,—a farm of fifteen acres is a large farm. They have no capital, and but little skill. They exhaust the land. I admit it. They do not pay half the rent which the employment of greater skill and capital would extract from the land. Carry your political economy into effect there, and see what would be the result. I think I have heard it advanced that the clearance system is at the root of half the evils of Ireland. But Free Trade requires it, and you must make more money. Turn them out, and when the existing generation is starved off, you may perhaps, see your system in successful operation. My Lords, he must be a bold minister who would advise such an experiment to be made, but he

must be a bold as well as a hard man who would act upon it (loud cheers). And then to tell me that this measure—this repeal of the Corn Law—is brought forward as a measure of relief to Ireland above all! I understand what you mean when you talk of relief to England. England is an importing country; it may be for the benefit of her population, though I doubt if it be found to be so in the long run, that the price of corn should be greatly lowered; but then, as to Ireland, whose exports are exclusively agricultural, and which is entirely an exporting, not an importing country—to say that you are benefiting Ireland by reducing the value of those exports by which alone she can obtain a return of the comforts of life and the articles of manufacture which she receives from you to the extent of £1,500,000 or £2,000,000 sterling a year, is a proposition which I would place by the side of that other paradox, that increased competition tends to raise prices (hear, and a laugh). Lastly, I must call your attention to one branch of the question so important that it cannot be overlooked, and upon which, from the situation I lately had the honour of holding, I feel that I am entitled to address you. I allude to the effect which is to be produced, not by the repeal of the Corn Law, but by the principles of Free Trade, and the doctrine of the removal of Protection, upon the colonies (hear, hear). Now your foreign trade takes a very large amount of foreign shipping and a very small amount of British shipping; I beg to call your attention to the fact, in the first instance, that by a return laid before the House of Commons in the year 1845, the tonnage of ships to your colonies was 1,273,395 tons British, entered inwards, against not one single ton foreign (hear, hear). Cleared outwards there were 1,263,432 tons British, against 3,702 tons foreign; your colonial trade therefore being, as it always is, exclusively carried on in British ships, employing British seamen, and giving the profit of the trade on both sides to British subjects exclusively (cheers). I will not enter upon the extent of that trade. But here are a certain number of the colonies, the exports to which in the year 1844, amounted to no less than £14,247,714. And now, my Lords, allow me to say, in passing, that when we calculate the amount of the export trade of this country, we include in that export trade, which bears so small a proportion to the home trade—we include in that trade the trade which goes on with your colonial empire, and amounting to one-third of the whole. Now, destroy this principle of protection, and I tell you in this place that you destroy the whole basis upon which your colonial system rests (cheers). My Lords, if you do not know the advantages of your colonies, Napoleon Bonaparte knew them well. It is by your colonial system, based upon the principles of protection, that you have extended your arms—I do not mean your military arms, I mean your commercial arms—to every quarter and every corner of the globe. It is to your colonial system that you owe it that there is not a sea on which the flag of England does not float; that there is not a quarter of the world in which the language of England is not heard; that there is not a quarter of the globe, that there is no zone in either hemisphere, in which there are not thousands who recognise the sovereignty of Britain—to whom that language and that flag speak of a home, dear, though distant,

of common interests, of common affections—men who share in your glories—men who sympathise in your adversities—men who are proud to bear their share of your burdens, to be embraced within the arms of your commercial policy, and to feel that they are members of your great imperial Zollverein (loud cheers). Look at the trade with Canada, and see what will be the consequence of the abrogation of the Corn Law. I have heard this put forward as a great boon to our Australian colonies. I do not exactly see how. At the present moment wheat from the Australian colonies can be introduced into the market here subject to a duty which never exceeds 5s. a quarter. Upon the payment of a duty not exceeding 5s., Australia has an exclusive admission to the protected market of this country. You are about to take away the duty of 5s. the quarter, which, it is said, prevents Australian corn from being introduced here, and then if corn falls in price 5s. a quarter, so far is Australia from being benefited, that it is placed in a worse position than it was before. And now what have you done with regard to Canada? You introduced a bill in which you promised to Canada a great advantage in the British market. You presented it to Canada as a protected market, and upon the faith of what you had done she imposed a duty of 3s. upon corn and flour taken from America. You encouraged Canada to make a large outlay of money in improving the communication by the St. Lawrence; you even lent her money for that purpose; you are now about to render that outlay valueless. You are going to break the promise you made to Canada (hear, hear). You are going to destroy the trade you fostered and encouraged. Nay, you are going to do much more; you are going to destroy the improved communication of the St. Lawrence; you are going to make the port of New York the channel of commercial intercourse between this country and Upper Canada, instead of your own St. Lawrence. Those who know that colony, know that I am speaking the truth, and nothing but that. It is a matter almost of indifference to the grower whether wheat grown in the western states of the Union and in Upper Canada is carried to New York or Montreal. The communication with New York is somewhat cheaper and easier. The market of Montreal regulates the price of the markets of New York; but now the corn of the western states and Upper Canada comes down the St. Lawrence to Montreal, employing British shipping, and that in our own territory, because there is a differential duty in favour of its coming by way of Montreal, and against its coming by way of New York. But if this measure passes that will be changed, and the corn will come, not by your own St. Lawrence, in ships navigated by your own countrymen, but through the United States; and I will tell your Lordships what is the fact. There are merchants in Montreal who, in anticipation of this measure passing, are preparing to set up their establishments in New York (hear, hear). I say nothing of the effect you are producing upon the feelings of the people. I will say nothing of the shock you will give to the loyalty of the people; but I say this, you are doing your utmost to irritate them by the breach of your engagement to them. My Lords, I will not enter into details, but I will venture to remind your Lordships that as political independence

may follow closely upon commercial independence, so dependence on another state may also follow from commercial dependence upon it. Are the United States blind to this? Do they not see the nature of your suicidal policy? Are your Lordships aware of the bill passed by Congress one or two years ago? That a bill was passed, actually granting a drawback to the amount, or almost so, of the import duty upon goods going into the seaports of the United States, provided those goods were carried through the United States, and re-shipped to Upper Canada? That a bill is now pending in Congress for the purpose of extending the import of goods from Canada, to be re-shipped to this country from the port of New York? Will that fact of the policy of the United States open your Lordships' eyes to the nature of the policy which you are pursuing? (hear, hear). When we are told that free trade is essential for the advantage of the manufactures of this country, that free trade should be established, and that no advantage should be derived by the colonies, I presume that if you deprive the colonies of all the protection they now enjoy, you intend to repeal that Act of Parliament which compels the colonies to impose a differential duty in favour of your produce. I can conceive no grosser injustice than your refusal to do that (cheers from Peers on the Opposition benches). Protection is mutual, Free Trade must be mutual also (hear). One-third, and more than one-third, of your manufactures goes to the colonies. Hear now what is the language of Mr. Greg, a distinguished member of the Anti-Corn Law League, as to those markets—the neutral markets—in which you are exposed to competition:—"At present," says Mr. Greg, "we are undersold by foreigners in neutral markets, in all the staple articles of English manufacture. In the articles of cotton, hosiery, and cutlery, which amount altogether to three-fourths of our exports, this is notoriously the case. In cotton fabrics, the Swiss undersell us in several markets. In cutlery, Sheffield is immensely undersold by the Alsace, and our exports are yearly decreasing. In hosiery, the case is still worse. Saxony is driving us not only out of the foreign markets, but out of our own. In hosiery, we used to supply three-fourths of the American demand. We now scarcely supply any. Saxon hosiery, after paying a duty of 20 per cent., is sold in London 25 to 30 per cent. cheaper than the produce of the Leicester and Nottingham looms. In Leicester, the stocking frames have diminished from 16,000 in 1815 to 14,000 in 1840; whilst in Saxony in the same time they have increased from 4,590 to 25,000. How far," says Mr. Greg, "with cheaper food, no taxes on the raw material and no duties but for the sake of revenue, we might yet recover our lost superiority is a matter for grave consideration. I do not believe we could either in woollens or hosiery; and even in the cutlery or the cotton trade, I think it very doubtful. The machinery of foreign nations even now is not inferior to our own, and is daily and rapidly improving, and the capital is fast accumulating, and the yearly interest of it approximating to our own rate. In the only remaining cost of production, that is the wages of labour, foreign nations have a decided advantage, and although a Free Trade in provisions, by lowering them here and raising them abroad, I doubt if it ever could be entirely recovered, yet better education,

of sober habits, more frugality and general forethought, together with cheaper food, will, no doubt, enable our people to live in much greater comfort than at present upon considerably smaller earnings" (arms). This, then, is the language of Mr. Greg, one of the leaders of the Anti-Corn Law League; and he, on the part of the manufacturers, frankly intimates that the last chance for the success of what the Free Trade resolves itself into a reduction of wages and our abundance of food. It is the last desperate experiment; and when we are called upon to give up markets which, because they are the richest, take one-third of your manufacture; when you are called upon to do this, to damage the home market, the proportion of which exclusively is to be to the whole foreign markets at least as four to one, and are upon the chance of finding markets abroad, I really must say that the force of folly can no further go (cheers). I trust that you, my Lords, will not be led away by any fanciful delusions upon this subject. I trust that you will not, in yielding to these delusions, consent to sacrifice the home producer. I am sensible, though I have spoken at great length, how feebly and imperfectly I have performed the duty I desired to discharge. I know that I must indifferently have fulfilled my task, but I do hope that your Lordships will give me credit for having kept closely to the subject; and I hope, further, that I have redeemed the pledge that I gave at the outset,—that in no observation that I might make, if I could possibly avoid it, would I make use of an expression calculated to wound the feelings of any one (cheers). But before I sit down, permit me to address a few words to those amongst your Lordships, and I believe there are many, who go along with me in the arguments I have employed, and who regard with the same alarm that I do this measure, and yet who, for various reasons, are prepared to assent to the second reading. I can conceive various motives which may impel high-minded and honourable men to take such a course. I know there may be those who feel ready to yield to the authority of the House of Commons; I entertain great respect for the authority of that House, of which I was a member twenty-two years. But where on this subject am I to discover its authority, and how to collect its opinions? I can but discover them in its recorded votes. Am I to be bound by its votes of 1846, of 1844, or of 1842? When I find that a measure in 1842 was rejected by a majority of 213, and another measure to the same effect, in the same year, rejected by a majority of 114; when I find it rejected by a majority of 256 in 1843, and again by a majority of 209 in 1844, and when I find a motion for a repeal of the Corn Laws rejected by a majority of 132 in June 1845, and when I find that same measure not negatived by a majority of 132, but affirmed by a majority of 98 by the same men and in the same House, I say this sudden conversion must tend to diminish the value I attach to the authority of the last vote of the House of Commons (loud cheers). I respect the judgment and decision of the House of Commons, but not because it is a decision of a majority of gentlemen more or less well educated and enlightened. I respect their decision because it is the decision of the representatives of public opinion in this country; and if I am to take the decision of the House of Commons, I must, if I am to

be bound by either decision, take that decision of the collected representation in 1842, rather than that of the collected representation in 1846, of the deliberate judgment and opinion of the people of this country (cheers). There are those who disapprove of this decision, but who, from a personal feeling of attachment to the Government, are prepared to vote with them. I sympathize with that feeling, but I cannot assent in justice to their course. There are too great interests at stake in this question, to be complimented away out of deference to any minister (hear, hear). Depend upon it, the public interests can never be benefited by the sacrifice of your own deliberate judgment, by turning round upon your own principles for the purpose of saving an Administration. My conviction is, that if you make the sacrifice it will be made in vain, for there never was a Government which permanently maintained office, much less power, when it rested on the somewhat contemptuous sufferance of its opponents, joined to the ill-concealed disgust, and the lukewarm and half-ashamed support, of its adherents (cheers). There may be those, my Lords, who hope, by giving their consent to this measure, to put an end to agitation, and to give satisfaction to the members of the Anti-Corn Law League. When, my Lords, was an organized agitation put down by concessions extorted from its opponents? Depend upon it, that when this body shall have once tasted the cup of political power, the draught will be too sweet to induce them to relinquish it. I agree with my Noble Friend, that this is only one of the measures which one after another will be the object of the Anti-Corn Law League. Why, my Lords, there is no secret made of it. I do not say that every member of the Anti-Corn Law League enters fully into those opinions; for I believe that there are many excellent men who have joined that body with none but commercial objects, who sincerely believe that Free Trade will be a benefit to the country and to themselves, and who would withdraw if there were any attempt to carry those objects further. But, recollect, that agitation having succeeded in one object is not a thing easy to put down. Here is the language used by one of the Free Traders at a meeting held in this city, at which a Mr. Lawrence Heyworth was in the chair. "They were told of the wonders that resulted from public opinion, that it was performing something like miracles, converting Prime Ministers to right principles; 'but that they must have something more than Free Trade in corn, fresh meat, and vegetables.' 'The discussions which had taken place had enlightened the public, and they would begin to ask—why continue a system of levying taxes by which the trade of the country is decreased, and the comforts of the people lessened? Men would begin to ask whether it would not be better to have one tax—a tax on property—to carry on the government of the country. Whether it would not be better to abolish the Custom-house system, to do away with the preventive force altogether, and to put up a board on the sea-coast with these words—Honest traders of all nations may land their stuff here. No taxes; no duties.' In further allusion to the great principles of Free Trade, he said they had lived to see their triumph in the most extraordinary way, but he would not have the friends of Free Trade to relax in their endeavours. They must remember the House of

Lords yet lived. It was still the stronghold of the aristocracy. They were struggling now for something more than the maintenance of the present commercial policy. They had a sure conviction that Free Trade would not only give the people more comfort, but more independence, and this was the thing they feared. Commercial and trading liberty would promote intelligence, and give an increased impulse to those great principles of civil and religious liberty on which this country was placing its affections. After the settlement of the Free Trade question, the people would then have more time to agitate for the great principle of universal suffrage. If it is good (said he) for commerce to be free, it is good for man to be free. If it is good for cotton and corn to be free, it is good for man to be free. Gradually human life was becoming of more importance—the very gallows was becoming odious. Everything which weakened the aristocracy, and increased the intelligence of the people, must be in favour of this noble and christian principle.” And I beg the attention of the Right Reverend bench to this passage—“Could they have Free Trade in commerce without Free Trade in religion; or could, under such a system, ecclesiastical despotism continue to blight our country? The time was not far distant when Catholics and Dissenters would ask, ‘Why shall the church of Christ continue to be bandaged by the trammels of the state? Why shall the ministers of the Gospel be compelled to wear the state’s livery?’ Freedom in religion, as displayed in the entire separation of Church and State, will be one of the glorious effects of Free Trade.” Lastly, my Lords, there is another motive which is most likely to operate with high-minded men; it is an unworthy fear and suspicion that they are acting from interested or dishonourable motives. My Lords, if I were speaking to an ordinary assembly, I might warn them of the danger of yielding to such motives; but, speaking to the assembly which I have the honour to address, I feel that I should rather warn you against a bias in the opposite direction; against assenting to a measure injurious both to the public and to your own interests, lest you should be unjustly suspected of interested motives. My Lords, you have no right to yield to such considerations. You are the trustees for far more than your personal interests; you are the trustees for your country, you are the trustees for posterity, you are the trustees for the constitution of the empire (cheers). My Lords, you, each and all of you, live amongst your neighbours, by whom you are looked up to as the guides for their political opinions; from you your neighbours take the colour of their opinions and their views; to you they look, to your opinions a respectful deference is paid, and it is you who have encouraged and promulgated the opinion that for the great interests of the country agricultural protection is essential. With what feelings, my Lords, with what face, having voted for the destruction of all protection to agriculture, can you show yourselves in the midst of those neighbours, who have hitherto regarded you with respect, and whose principles and opinions you have heretofore influenced? They will charge you, and charge you justly, as you now charge the Government, with having misled and betrayed those who have placed their confidence in you (cheers). Therefore, my

Lords, if against your own deliberate opinions you consent to pass this measure, be prepared to abdicate the hitherto high place you have held in the constitution ; if you sacrifice your own opinions to the intimidation of faction, the allurements of power, or the dictation of any Minister on earth, be prepared hereafter to be looked upon as a subordinate branch of the constitution, to be looked upon only as the registrars of the edicts of the House of Commons, and as the pliant followers of the Minister of the day (cheers). My Lords, if I know anything of the constitutional value of this House, it is to interpose a salutary obstacle to rash and inconsiderate legislation ; it is to protect the people from the consequences of their own imprudence. It never has been the course of this House to resist a continued and deliberately-formed public opinion ; your Lordships always have bowed, and always will bow to the expression of such an opinion ; but it is yours to check hasty legislation, leading to irreparable evils ; and it is yours—though the constitution can hardly have been deemed to have provided for such a contingency—to protect the people, not against their own hasty judgments, but against the treachery of those whom they have chosen to be their representatives (loud cheers). My Lords, if, acting on your own deliberate and impartial opinion, scorning the degrading suspicion of being actuated by unworthy motives, you follow the course which in your consciences you believe to be for the good of the country, you may fail in effecting your purpose, but you will not be condemned ; overborne by numbers you may be, but not degraded. You may not succeed in averting the threatened evil, but you will secure the approbation of your friends, and compel the respect of your opponents (cheers). And if, by the blessing of God, your decision shall arrest the progress of this hasty and inconsiderate measure ; if you shall thus give time for the intelligence of the country to act upon the public mind ; if, happily, you shall succeed in leading back the country to a wiser course, and in adopting the too much despised wisdom of your ancestors, then you will justly be a “proud aristocracy ;” proud of having faithfully discharged the duty vested in you by the constitution ; proud of having withstood alike the seductions of power, and the threats of popular clamour ; proud of having succeeded in saving your country from this great delusion, this hazardous and fearful experiment. Your best reward, my Lords, will be the approval of your own consciences ; but doubt not but that you will have a farther reward in the approbation of a grateful and admiring nation, to which you will have given just cause to exclaim—“Thank God, we have a House of Lords !” [The Noble Lord resumed his seat amidst great cheering.]

LORD BROUGHAM.—I am quite aware, my Lords, that I stand before you under some disadvantages. We have just heard a speech of surpassing ability delivered at so late a period of the evening. Among the many great advantages which my Noble Friend enjoys over me—which I need not stop to enumerate, because all who have heard his speech will acknowledge the merits which intrinsically belong to him, at all times and at all hours of the night—but certainly one of the advantages which he has upon the present occasion, purely by accident, but which is equal to all his other

advantages put together, is, that he has made a most exciting and animated, and to a great portion of your Lordships, a most successful speech, and also a very long speech—though I did not feel that it was long, or that it needed those apologies which he frequently addressed to us, yet nevertheless the clock shows that it was a very long speech—and that I rise to address your Lordships not at nine o'clock but after twelve, which is a great disadvantage at all times but more especially in this House, where we are not in the habit of having long debates. But, my Lords, this circumstance teaches me to confine myself within the smallest limits possible, and to proceed without further preface to the duty before me. As I am about to address myself not to those who agree with, but those who differ from me in opinion, I must beg the favour of some portion of their attention whilst I apply myself to answering the speech of the Noble Lord which has given them such satisfaction. I wave with my Noble Friend all personal allusions; he did well, and I am sure that other speakers will follow his example; but there is one subject of a personal nature which I cannot resist mentioning—the origin of the present bill. But I proceed to say a word, begging the attention of the Noble Lord in return for the undivided attention which I assure him I paid to his speech, which I promise him shall not be one-third the length he exacted from me—I say I proceed at once to the origin of the present measure. It is said to have been the pressure of the famine, or the supposed famine, in certain districts of Ireland. I doubt the fact of there being a general famine in Ireland; I have never heard it stated that there was a general famine there; but that a general pressure of misery and scarcity did exist in many large districts of Ireland is a fact as certain as that we are sitting debating here to-night (hear, hear). But, says my Noble Friend, that is no reason—that furnishes no sufficient ground, for doing away with protection, or even of opening the ports, as had been recommended. I deny the fact, as I am ready to show that it was a sufficient ground. But I beg, before proceeding further, to say that it is quite immaterial to the merits of the bill what was its origin. I might most consistently say that the Government were wrong in proceeding with the bill this year; I might consistently contend that there was no ground for the precipitancy with which it has been brought forward in 1846;—I might consistently argue that Sir R. Peel did a rash, an indiscreet, and an imprudent act, by bringing in the measure this year; but that upon the merits of the measure, howsoever recommended, whensoever introduced, under whatever pressure, or under no pressure at all, if the measure is a sound one in itself, I am bound to give it, as an honest man, my cordial support (hear, hear). I state this to guard myself from being mixed up with the extraneous and accidental circumstances connected with the measure—and as the real and substantial ground upon which I approve of it. But I am free to admit that I see nothing superfluous, nothing unnecessary, nothing rash, nothing indiscreet whatever in the choice of the last autumn and the last winter for the first proposal of the repeal of the Corn Laws (hear, hear). The Noble Lord calls upon the supporters of the measure to say what effect the Repeal of the Corn Laws will have upon the state of

the markets—he requires of us that we should tell him what increase or diminution that event may produce in the course of two, three, or four years. Now, I take upon myself to say that that is about one of the most difficult problems which any one could be called upon to solve. When a change takes place in the nature and materials of our importations, nothing can be more difficult than to tell beforehand what the effect of that will be. Suppose that corn be sold for 30s. at Dantzic at the time that our Corn Laws are repealed, who can undertake to say what the effect of that will be upon our corn market? Supposing it to be 30s. now, who can say how cheap it will be when the Corn Laws are repealed? To answer that question I must be able to tell the effect upon the English market, which will be produced by the knowledge in Dantzic that the English Corn Laws have been repealed. I must estimate the 5s. freight, the 2s. insurance, the 3s. other expenses, and having brought it up to 40s., I must then be able to tell what the effect of all this will be on the market at Dantzic. But though neither I, nor my Noble Friend, nor any one else can answer these questions, my Noble Friend went on to tell us that new land would be brought into cultivation, and then my Noble Friend talked to us of the state of the land in the Ukraine, and of the land in Hungary, and whether he knew less of the land in the Ukraine and more of that in Hungary, or less of the latter and more of the former, does not very distinctly appear; but, nevertheless, he did not abstain from telling us that these lands, of which we know so little, would come suddenly into cultivation, that there would be an immediate clearance of the lands in Hungary, and yet I venture to assert, that if my Noble Friend will make inquiries of any Hungarian nobleman, who may now happen to be in London, he will find that he has been reckoning without his host. The probability is that it will take much time to effect any material increase in the productive powers of the land of Hungary—that acre after acre must be slowly and laboriously brought into cultivation—that there can be no sudden clearing away of the impediments to tillage—that you cannot in one day go through all the operations of stubbing up trees, clearing roots, digging deep below the surface, sawing, burning, ploughing, and harrowing—that you cannot by a single effort divide fields, make fences, erect barns, granaries, and farm-houses—that all this cannot be done by a mere exercise of volition—that a numerous peasantry must be called into existence for the execution of such works; and be it remembered that the population of the Ukraine and Hungary do not increase at the rate of 1,000 a day, as they do in this country. Besides, a vast amount of capital will be required for effecting such great objects upon so large a scale. We know very well that in this country it requires a capital of £10 an acre to carry on the business of farming, but how much per acre does it require to clear a primitive farm, and bring it out of a state of nature into a state of cultivation? I am confident that the agriculturists will benefit much more by this great improvement in our laws than they will lose by a diminution in the market value of their produce (hear, hear). I look forward to this measure as almost undoubtedly certain to extend our foreign trade incalculably, and in a very short period of time (hear, hear).

But before I come to that part of my Noble Friend's speech—and with regard to some portions of that speech they are puzzling and require some explanations—I will say a word or two on the main argument urged in favour of the protective system. My Noble Friend said, quoting great authorities in support of the assertion, that the use of protection is to make this country independent of a foreign supply, and among others he quoted the late Mr. Huskisson, who said—"The great object was for ourselves to grow the corn which makes the bread of the people." There is no question whatever that the great interests of this country and of every other country, is to grow the bulk of the food of the people within the bounds of the country; and, except in one instance, I mean that of the United States' provinces, there is and can be no country under the sun in which, whatever the system of Corn Laws may be, and whether there exists protection or not, the people must not find it necessary to be fed by corn growing within the bounds of their own country. The only object of free importations must be to relieve you in years of scarcity or in the dearth of a bad year; that is a matter of absolute certainty. Why, in years of famine in this country there were never anything like 2,000,000 of quarters imported. The whole importation in 1800 and 1801 was 1,100,000 quarters each year from the whole of Europe, and if you add 200,000 quarters of corn, you do not show a very large importation. In 1810 it was 1,500,000 quarters, and why, therefore, do you wish these restrictions? And why do you say that the people of this country ought to be independent of the people of other countries for the supply of food? Oh, it is said, foreign powers may change their law, and, at any moment close their ports and starve you. I have an answer to that in one word; I point to 1810 (hear, hear), and I say that that argument survives not the mention of that year one single instant (cheers). When did you ever see the continent under such a power as that to which it bowed in 1810? When, ever again, are you likely to see it enthralled by such an iron hand as that which then grasped the universal sceptre of Europe—I may say of the continental world (cheers). Do you remember what year that was? Talk to me of petty Sovereigns now stopping exportation from Egypt, from Belgium, from Antwerp, from the Hague; why then, Napoleon, in his iron grasp, held, as I said before, the sceptre not of France only, but of all continental Europe, and do you remember the degree to which he had enforced his despotism over these states? Why, from the very centre as it were—from the heart, the pulsations of which influenced all Europe,—from Paris to the millions of the world, he could send forth an edict which would shut all Europe against us (hear, hear). From the Channel to the Gulf of Leghorn, from Paris to the outermost parts of Poland, there was not one single person in authority, not a troop of horse, not a company of foot, not a custom house officer, not an exciseman, who did not tremble at his name, or refused to obey his mandate (cheers). Is that likely to happen again? Did that ever happen before? And yet, what was the result of it all? Was Napoleon bent upon any single thing so much as destroying the trade of England? Was he bent upon any one project so much, was anything so dear to his

heart, as sealing up our own produce, and preventing any one bushel of corn ever reaching this country? And yet the result of it was that 1,250,000 quarters, and taking also the corn, there 1,514,000 quarters were imported into England, during that same year—1810. And not from outports, observe, where his power might be supposed to be somewhat weakened; not from Odessa where he had little influence; not from Africa, where, it may be said, he had none at all; not from Naples where his strength was unimportant; not from Sicily, the olden granary of Rome—no: no such thing; but 99 parts in every 100 of those 1,514,000 quarters came from France itself—from thence imported into this country (cheers). The mention of that year, 1810, at once extinguished the argument. I do not look forward to any sudden, rapid, instantaneous increase of our traffic with foreign countries; but one thing I confidently expect, that if we set the example, and remove the restrictions from our commercial code, other countries will follow the same line (cheers). We do not live in a period when any country, especially countries like France and Belgium, with constitutional governments, as Germany, which is likely soon to obtain constitutional government—when the voice of the consumer is heard, and the opinions of the capitalist and manufacturer are consulted—are likely to remain behind; these countries, you may be perfectly assured, if you withdraw your restrictions and your restrictive line of policy, will effect a corresponding change in theirs (hear). Of this also, I am certain, that you can do yourselves no kind of service by retaining your restrictions; even should the improvements of this system be postponed by other countries, you will be none the worse for it; while if your example be followed by them it will be a most important and valuable circumstance for this country. As to the sliding scale, my Noble Friend spoke much in its favour, and asked, why adopt this new system when the sliding scale has operated so advantageously? My Lords, that argument does not apply to me, who never approved of the sliding scale. My argument against it was always this, that the inevitable consequence of such a system was to cause a great accumulation in foreign ports, or in the bonded stores, and that our market was sure to be flooded and drenched with it just at the time when the home grower could least bear up against it. Let me here remind you that the years which have passed since 1842 were such as could not by possibility test the utility of the sliding scale (hear, hear). The true test of the sliding scale is to be found in a time of scarcity; but we have had abundant harvests since 1842—even last year was in many respects abundant, though not of such good quality as some preceding years, and it is well known that 1844 was so very prolific that three-fourths of the produce of that year are still on hand. In these circumstances no one is entitled to say that the last few years have tested the sliding scale (hear). My Lords, I am no party to the follies and exaggerations I have seen prevail out of doors: I am no party to the abuse I have seen heaped on the landowners of this country (hear). I value the landed interest of this country as the great, substantial, and most important of all the interests in the kingdom. I regard the advocates of that interest, even

when I differ with them in their opinions, as performing a great and conscientiously discharged duty to their country. Above all, I deny that the supporters of the landed interest in this country are only to be numbered by the landlords, and the tenants, and the yeomen, who are more immediately engaged in the cultivation of the soil (cheers). The great landed interest of this kingdom, my Lords, is of power, and might, and influence enough to counterbalance all the other interests, if they were put in opposite scales, the one to the other (hear). That has ever been my fixed and decided opinion. But they are not in opposite scales; for there is on the part of the landed interest, not perhaps the meddling merchants or the petty tradesmen—though the tradesmen in your small towns will always be found ranged with them in all controversies in which they appear as a party,—but all the great traders, and great capitalists, and merchants and mercantile men in the country, all the important public bodies, the Bank, the East India Company, the insurance companies, the railway companies, the law, the church, the army, the navy, all these bodies forming the prodigious mass of the whole power, and wealth, and influence of the kingdom,—all are found, for the most part, and in the main, and in the long run, to take part with the landed interest, as the great Conservative supporters of the institutions of the empire (hear). Therefore when I have made up my mind to support this measure of Corn Law repeal, and to take away what they most fallaciously call their natural and necessary protection, it must not be thought that I wish to injure the landed interest; on the contrary, I believe I am adding to the safety and security of that great body (hear). I hold that any shilling of protection on the quarter of wheat, is a full tax of one shilling on every man in the kingdom, be he rich or poor. Though I do not think the landed interest or the institutions of the country require this protection, and that the sooner they get rid of it the better for those institutions it will be, yet I will tell the landed interest where they will find a protection for themselves, and a bulwark for our institutions. I would say to them, “*Si munimentum quæris, circumspice;*” look at the talent they have exhibited in the present discussion, and then let those blush, if they are capable of that decorum, who have ever talked with contempt of the talents, accomplishments, and acquirements of the aristocracy of this country. Reflect on the splendid exhibition of talent there has been in another place during the whole discussion; in their own ability is their best protection. And though they have failed there, as I hope they will here, in attaining the object they strove for, yet they have gained a more effectual protection for themselves, and a far better security for the institutions of which they are the chosen guardians. They have displayed talents for affairs and powers of debate which their adversaries had given them little credit for, and which their country must ever after benefit by. I think I should be guilty of public ingratitude if I did not also express my deep sense of the public virtue, prodigious power of mind, and moral courage exhibited by my Right Hon. Friend at the head of the Government, in bringing forward this measure. He has cast away all selfish, private, and personal considerations—he has disregarded his own interest in every step and stage of the process. He has given up what to a Minister is, of all

positions, the most to be envied—calm, unquestioned, undivided power and superiority; he has exposed himself to the most tempestuous and troubled sea the political world ever exhibited; he has given up what to an ambitious man is much—the security of his power; he has given up what to a calculating man is much—his influence and authority with his party; he has given up what to an amiable man is much—private friendships and party connexions. All these he has sacrificed voluntarily and with his eyes open, for the discharge of what he deemed a great public duty. In these circumstances he can scorn the sordid attacks and ribaldry with which he has been out of doors assailed, because he knows he has entitled himself to the gratitude of his country, and left his name to an admiring posterity as one of the greatest Ministers who ever ruled this country.

The **EARL OF WILTON** moved the adjournment of the debate.

### TUESDAY, MAY 26.

Petitions against the Corn Importation Bill were presented by Lord Beaumont; by the Earl of Falmouth, from Mr. J. T. Theffay, an influential gentleman residing in Cornwall; by the Earl of Winchilsea (240) petitions; and by the Duke of Richmond, a great number of petitions, one signed by 1,390 tenant-farmers.

Petitions in favour of the bill were presented by several Noble Lords. Among them was one by Earl Fitzwilliam, from the corporation of Leeds.

The **EARL OF WILTON**, in resuming the debate on the second reading of the Corn Importation Bill, remarked, that on a question so important, involving a social revolution, he was anxious to declare, for the first time, his opinions on this subject. Hoping that he might not weaken the effect of the eloquent, statesmanlike, and touching address of his Noble Relative on the previous night, he would briefly notice the act of 1842, and the grounds alleged for now varying that arrangement. Far from being hostile to Free Trade, so far as it was compatible with the constitution and condition of this country, he had supported several measures of relaxation; but relaxation must have a limit. Never had there been a bill which so completely effected the intentions of its enactors as that of 1842 (hear). Why, then, quarrel with it? What was the reason for the change? The groundwork, no doubt, notwithstanding the disclaimer of the Noble Earl (the Earl of Ripon), was the destitution and scarcity in Ireland. We had been told by the Government, if we doubted it, to wait till May and we should have demonstrative evidences of it; but May, had arrived, and when he asked where were those evidences of distress, echo answered, "Where?" If it existed, however, it would not be a ground for this great change in our whole commercial system—a change which would not lower prices in anything like the proportion in which it would lower wages. How had this bill been carried in the House of Commons? By a compact alliance of that party who entertained the most extreme and dangerous opinions in that House. To them had been united that portion of the Whig party who had changed their opinions from a fixed duty to no duty at all, and also that section of the Conservative party whose opinions had undergone a still further change (hear,

hear). Such sudden conversion seldom carried with it public conviction, and tended to lower the public character of public men (cheers). If their Lordships believed that the proposed change was calculated to impair the constitution and weaken the pillars of the throne, let no considerations of expediency induce them to vote for it. Regardless of clamour from without, and fearless of the imputation of selfish or interested motives, let them by voting against the second reading of the bill make use of that legitimate power vested in them for the preservation of the monarchy and the constitution (hear, hear).

The DUKE of CAMBRIDGE next addressed the House. The illustrious Duke began by stating, that he owed it to his country and to his own character to state frankly the line which he felt it his duty to pursue on this very important question. He believed that he was now the oldest member of their Lordships' House, having been a Peer for the period of 45 years, and he believed there were very few of their Lordships who had sat in that House for so long a space of time. He had made it a rule from the moment he started in life never to give a vote in opposition to the Government of the country. When he could not from conviction vote with them, he had given no vote at all. He was too old now to change his sentiments. Having set himself right on this point, he begged to say that he did not mean to give a vote on the present question. Painful as it might be to him not to give his vote in support of the Government on this occasion, he could not help that,—for his own character was at stake (cheers from the cross-benches). If he did not state frankly what he meant he should be supposed to be lukewarm on this question, which, on the contrary, he looked upon as the most important that had ever come under consideration since he had had a seat in that House; and no man could deplore more than himself that it had ever been brought forward. He had gone to the House of Commons to listen to the speech of the Right Hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government, with the hope (as he had the highest opinion of that Right Hon. Gentleman) that the Right Hon. Gentleman would be able to convince him by argument that he might accede to the measure; but he fairly acknowledged that he could not approve of the reasons adduced by the Right Hon. Gentleman (cheers). Every one knew that he (the Duke of Cambridge) was no politician; he was never actuated by party feelings; but attended honestly and fairly to any subject that might be brought forward, the sole object which he had in view being the good of his country (hear, hear). With respect to the question itself, he regretted most sincerely, that it had ever been brought forward, less on account of the question itself than for the consequences (hear, hear). The Illustrious Duke, after addressing a few words to the bench of Bishops, which were totally inaudible in the gallery, and expressing his admiration of the speech of the Noble Lord (Stanley) last night, concluded by stating that he could not approve of the measure, and that, as he could not vote with the Government, he should abstain from voting altogether (hear, hear).

EARL GRANVILLE said that he had for one been for some years in favour of unreserved Free Trade, and when he saw the sacrifices

now made by the Government in order to adopt the principles of Free Trade, that was a circumstance calculated to give increased force to his convictions. With respect to commercial regulations, he thought that the last authority to appeal to was the wisdom of our ancestors (hear, hear). Considering the great increase which had taken place in manufactures, wealth, the means of communication, and in the population itself, he thought it idle—on matters relating to commerce and trade—to go back to the time of Edward IV. (hear, hear). He would much rather consider who were the parties that opposed and who the parties that supported the present commercial policy of the Government? With regard to the commercial and manufacturing classes, he could not allow of their being called turbulent and violent. By their daily avocations they were obliged to attend to all matters which operated on the commerce of the country; and, as a body, they were in favour of this bill. So were the most eminent men of both parties; and, therefore, whether his opinions with respect to Free Trade were right or wrong, he had some authority for supporting them. By passing this measure—their Lordships, so far from ruining any class, or making any constitutional change, would only be making a great fiscal change, setting an example to other countries of the true principle on which commercial legislation should be conducted, and settling an agitation which divided two interests that ought to be inseparably connected (hear, hear).

The MARQUIS OF NORMANBY said that his opinions on this question were rather peculiar; for he did not believe that the intrinsic effects of an alteration of the law would be so extensive, either for good or for evil, as was supposed by the conflicting parties by whom it was supported and opposed. He did not agree with the Noble Earl who had spoken to-night, that either the safety of the great institutions of the country or the cause of religion were involved in this question. He (the Marquis of Normanby) had always advocated the gradual and general application of the principles of Free Trade; he had approved every relaxation of the tariff which could tend to promote amicable relations with foreign countries, and lead to a more equal interchange of our mutual productions; and he had never held that any peculiar exemption from the application of those principles should be allowed with respect to corn. Believing that the beneficial consequences likely to ensue to the working classes from an alteration in the Corn Laws had been exaggerated, he felt it his duty to express that opinion candidly and openly. He did think, however, that the present measure would tend in a certain degree to alleviate the misery of a large portion of their fellow-subjects. He did not allude merely to that misery which was to a greater or less extent the lot of all who gained their livelihood by severe labour; but he referred to that deep degradation and misery, more apparent from its contrast with surrounding wealth and comfort, in which the poor of many districts were plunged, and which, unless they disregarded the safety and credit of the state, ought not to remain unalleviated. His attention had been most painfully directed to this subject, when, for a period of two years, he administered the internal affairs of this kingdom, and the result of his experience during that time had

satisfied him that any alteration of the existing Corn Laws would not, in itself, tend very materially to mitigate the sufferings of the poor. He must say, for his own part, that he would very much prefer a fixed duty to the proposition now under consideration. This was a description of bill with which their Lordships very rarely interfered. It was contrary to the spirit of the constitution for their Lordships to impose taxes, and the custom had been, if their Lordships considered that a measure of this kind was so objectionable that it ought not to pass into a law, to propose its rejection on the second reading. That would be an intelligible course, and it would be equivalent to a rejection of the bill. Any Noble Lord who felt inclined to vote for an alteration of the present bill in Committee had better vote against the second reading, because he might be assured that any amendment in the bill would be followed by its rejection in the other House. He had a great anxiety to maintain the legitimate influence of their Lordship's House, and he should be sorry to see them exposed to the undeserved reproach that, in taking so unusual a course as that of interfering with a money bill, they were influenced by a regard for their once private interests. Did the Noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) believe that the present Ministerial majority of 98 in the other House would be diminished in the event of an appeal to the country? Those who thought so saw their way much more clearly than he did, and he did not believe the Government could be carried on in the other House except by one or the other of the two great parties who were pledged to the maintenance of this bill. He did not agree with those who spoke of this bill as "irrevocable." If it produced all the evils that were anticipated—if it threw land out of cultivation and disturbed the labour market, their Lordships would have no difficulty whatever in retracing their steps. He believed that this measure would be for good, but it would be purchased at a suicidal price by its authors, in the sacrifice of their public character (cheers). Their Lordships, however, could betray no constituents by voting for it, and there could be no responsibility upon them if they took the course he recommended them to take, and passed this bill. On the whole, viewing it as a measure from which benefits might arise, and seeing great evils in that House interfering for its rejection, it was his intention to give his vote for the second reading.

The EARL OF CARDIGAN said that, having had the honour of a seat in that and the other House for more than a quarter of a century, during which he had given a steady and undeviating support to the leaders of her Majesty's present Government, he begged to state the reasons why he could not support that Government on the present bill. What had occurred to justify the Government in calling on the House to repeal the laws for the protection of agriculture? It was true there had been, unfortunately, distress during the winter months in the sister kingdom, and, though he believed that distress had been exaggerated, her Majesty's Government had adopted a prudent course in applying a temporary relief. But was there any man living who believed that the temporary calamity in Ireland was sufficient to lead her Majesty's Government to call on the House to repeal the laws for protecting the agricultural interest? At the

last election a preponderating majority was returned to the other House of Parliament in favour of Protection. The opinion of Parliament had been taken four or five times since, in every case affirming the principle of Protection, and now they were called upon to stultify all their former votes, and reverse them. If they did yield upon this question, he trusted they would not yield hastily, and only after the clearly expressed opinions of the people of this country (cheers).

The EARL OF WINCHILSEA said he could not satisfy his feelings in the discharge of his public duty, or feel that he was doing justice to that great body of the people who had called upon him to agitate this question, by giving a silent vote upon it. He would give all he possessed if he could suppress his feelings so far as simply to record his vote against this measure. But whether he approached the question by considering it as the downfall of that great political party with which, for thirty years, he had been connected, or whether he regarded it as destructive of all political confidence in public men, he could not give a silent vote upon the present occasion (cheers). He would say that some Noble Lords were inclined in 1846 to take the same course which they took in 1829; but he implored them not to do so; for if they gave a vote contrary to their conscientious opinions, they would forfeit not only the respect and confidence of the country, but, what was of more consequence, their own. Several Noble Lords had expressed to him the deep regret which they would carry to their graves that, upon a memorable occasion, they had been induced to do violence to their own feelings and support the existing Government of the day; and their Lordships might depend upon it that if they forfeited again the respect and confidence of the people of England, as they did in 1839, from that moment the independence of their Lordships' House would cease. It might exist as a House of Lords, but it would be dependent upon the House of Commons (hear, hear).

The EARL OF CLARENDON said that since he had had a seat in their Lordships' House, he had rarely missed an opportunity of stating what he conscientiously believed to be the evils of the protection system, and that the time was rapidly approaching when the Corn Laws must be abolished. He trusted that this was nearly the last time when they would be called on to discuss this question, and he could not avoid expressing the unfeigned satisfaction with which, in common with all those who desired to carry out the principles of Free Trade, he viewed a measure that would for ever, and he wished he could add at once, put an end to that system of protection, and which was brought in with all the weight and authority of a Conservative Administration. It appeared to him of little consequence what had induced the Government to propose this measure. The decision of the Cabinet was unanimous, with the important exception of the Noble Lord (Stanley). Whatever had influenced the Government in proposing it, he rejoiced at the introduction of the measure, and almost as much in the wisdom and justice of the avowals and arguments by which those who had been hitherto opposed to such a measure had supported it in the long ordeal it had undergone elsewhere. It was highly encouraging to those who earnestly desired to witness the

triumph of Free Trade principles, that at the present moment there was a Free Trade league in Paris with a Duke at its head. It was well known that in the American Congress it had been proposed that no duties should in future be imposed, except for the purposes of revenue; and it was quite evident that the tendency of all public opinion must be towards a free intercourse between all nations. Restrictions upon trade were rapidly crumbling away, and would soon be forgotten amongst other antiquated systems. To promote Free Trade was to carry into effect the law of God. Freedom of commercial intercourse was a policy which gave and received the best guarantees for the preservation of that most inestimable blessing, peace. The present measure appeared to have been brought forward, not only with reference to our foreign policy, but also with regard to our domestic position, at a most favourable moment. He conceived it to be a measure founded upon the true interests of all classes, as well as upon a comprehensive view of the varying circumstances and complicated interests of this great country (hear, hear).

The EARL OF CARNARVON thought that there never was a period more unfavourable than the present to the introduction of Free Trade principles; and he did, therefore, greatly lament to see his Noble Friend introducing such a measure as that which then occupied their Lordships' attention. Something had been said of our exports to France; but there appeared to him to be much misapprehension on that point. France lived under a protective system; and France, with all its skill and greatness—with all its refinement and civilization, had not yet, he believed, reached its culminating point of prosperity; and he felt convinced that this country had not yet reached its highest point of greatness. But England had long been advancing towards that point, and had already reached a high rank amongst the nations of the earth, still existing and still advancing under a prohibitory system. In this state of things he saw no indications pointing to Free Trade; and it did appear to him that the Governments which adopted Free Trade principles belonged to the smaller and not to the greater states. For his part, he never at any time advocated prohibition; he had never been friendly even to high protecting duties, nor was he opposed to the tariff of 1842. Moreover it had always been his opinion that the Corn Law of 1815 was a great error—that it was grievously erroneous, inasmuch as it carried prohibition to its utmost height. It had been believed by the ablest statesmen that the abolition of the Corn Laws would throw 2,000,000 of acres of land out of cultivation, and reduce 6,000,000 of their countrymen to beggary, destitution, and despair. Now they were told the contrary, and that it would stimulate trade and production; he put very little faith in political prophecies of any kind. They had been told, too, that farms were letting well, and from this it was argued that there was no danger from the measure. But he knew of a case in which an individual who was prepared to invest £150,000 in agriculture before the present change had since stated that he would wait to see the result, and how it might turn out (hear). There were two kinds of farming; one of small outlay and limited production, the other of great outlay and great production; he feared the measure would add to the number

of unimproving farmers, and many who had been prepared to invest money in land would now pause before they did so, their spirit of enterprise being checked by a justifiable caution. He objected to the present measure that it would tend to make prices extravagantly high at one time, and ruinously low at another. In a deficient harvest they might require a large supply from foreign states, but they were affected by the same causes that produced scarcity here ; and how then could they send a sufficient supply ? Their Government, on the principle of self-preservation, would forbid exportation, or, turning the necessity of England to the account of the exchequer, would place such a duty on export as must raise the price to the people of this country. He did not believe the people would be great gainers by the Free Trade, even when they might need it most. The same causes, to some extent, affected the United States of America, and he believed very high prices in time of scarcity would be the result of this law, while in plentiful seasons their markets would suffer from positive glut and extreme depression. He believed foreign Governments would do every thing to stimulate a trade in corn that would be so beneficial to them. The Noble and Learned Lord asked where their capital was to come from ; there could be no doubt that British capital would rush into those countries that offered so fair a field for speculation, where industry was to a great extent free from the shackles of taxation, local and general, to which it was here subjected. He contended that a greatly increased demand for corn might be attended by a progressive decrease in prices, as in the case of tea, coffee, and cotton ; in fact, this had been the fact for the last thirty years, to the amount of 34 or 35 per cent. Was there any guarantee to the British farmer against the consequences of a ruinous competition ? They were treading on doubtful, if not positively hollow ground, and embarking in a course of most hazardous legislation (hear, hear). Their Lordships had often already expressed their opinions on these points. They had shown to the country that when grave changes were proposed to them, they looked to the welfare of the people alone ; and the country had now the right to expect that they would scornfully reject at the hands of one body of men that which they would not take from another (hear). Would this raise the character of that House for political truth and sincerity ? No doubt, party attachments must greatly sway the mind, and it was very difficult to separate from a beloved and distinguished leader ; but the public were but imperfectly aware of these under-currents of feeling, and would look to the broad aspect of the stream ; and what must they think of Noble Lords one day supporting Protection, and the next day Free Trade ? (hear, hear). Honour not only really unsullied, but without an apparent blemish, should be the leading attribute of the Peers of England. Honour was theirs by right of birth ; it should be, in the words of the poet:—

“ Rather part of them than theirs.”

It should accompany them not only untarnished, but unsuspected, from the cradle to the grave (hear, hear). If the people of England should come to believe of those Peers, that love of country was

swallowed up in party attachments, then he should feel that the light of that House, once so bright, had waxed dim ; that its "occupation was gone,"—its purpose fulfilled ; and it would be of little consequence whether, in the progress of continued concession, its career should be brought to an early close ; or whether, by its new masters, the Lords of the League, it should be condescendingly permitted for a time to cumber with useless splendour the land it could no longer benefit (hear, hear).

The EARL of MALMESBURY rose at the same moment with the EARL of HADDINGTON, and there were loud calls for both the Noble Lords, and some confusion ; at length the DUKE of RICHMOND moved "That the Earl of Malmesbury be now heard," and, the Earl of Haddington having then sat down, the former Noble Earl proceeded to express his deep regret at finding himself now, after so many years, placed face to face with the men he had all his life faithfully followed. In April, 1842, the motion of a Noble and Learned Lord (Lord Brougham) for the repeal of all duties on corn met with the support of only five peers ; while 109 voted against the motion. Let it not, then, be thought discourteous to assume, that if this bill should pass, it might be, not from conscientious conviction that it was best for the country, but either because Noble Lords felt the necessity of placing unbounded confidence and reliance in the Minister of the Crown, or because they thought the bill loudly and sincerely demanded by the majority of the people (hear, hear). This bill had been sent up to their Lordships by a clear majority of the House of Commons ; but he could not call it a clean majority (cheers and laughter). If their Lordships forced the Government to dissolve Parliament, and if, after the election, this bill should again be sent up to their Lordships by a clean as well as a clear majority, though he should not abandon his opinions or his apprehensions with respect to the bill, he should, however, feel it his duty as an English Peer, to bow to the undoubted and indisputable opinion of the majority of his countrymen (hear, hear).

The EARL of HADDINGTON assured their Lordships that his anxiety to address the House when the Noble Earl who had just sat down rose, did not proceed from any notion that he was about to perform a very agreeable duty. Neither in that or the other House had he ever risen with more unfeigned reluctance or with feelings of greater pain. That reluctance and that pain did not proceed from any doubt or hesitation in his own mind as to the line of conduct he had pursued ; but arose from feelings of the deepest regret at finding himself opposed to so great a number of their Lordships for whom he felt the greatest respect, with whom he entertained so many opinions in common, and with whom it had been for so many years his pleasure as well as his pride to act. He must say that there had been much exaggeration on the part of several Noble Lords who had opposed this measure, as to the results which might be anticipated from it. Some Noble Lords had not been content with prophesying that all manner of evils would follow the adoption of the principle of Free Trade, so far as the prosperity of the agricultural interest was concerned, but they had also prophesied ruin and destruction to

church and state (hear, hear), and had predicted that it would eventually lead to general anarchy and confusion. His Noble Friend on the cross benches (the Duke of Richmond), had opened this formidable battery of awful prophecies, and had concluded his speech by a tremendous announcement of the evils which were to follow the adoption of this bill.

**THE DUKE OF RICHMOND.**—I referred to the results of clamour and agitation.

**THE EARL OF HADDINGTON.**—His Noble Friend was followed in this course by the Noble Duke who sat next him; and he must own that, to his no small astonishment, the example was also followed by his Noble Friend (Lord Stanley) in one of the most able speeches he had heard in that House (hear). That Noble Lord had displayed first-rate parliamentary talent; and this display had been most gratifying to him (the Earl of Haddington), when he considered the character of that Noble Lord, and the high position he was one day destined to fill in this country (hear, hear). He (the Earl of Haddington) conceived that the great object of the Corn Law was to prevent fluctuation, to secure steadiness of price, and to make us independent of foreign nations. Now, with all the attention he had been able to pay to this question, he could not find that it had answered any one of those objects (hear, hear). He did believe that the Corn Law had, to a certain degree—by having gained the confidence of the agricultural body—contributed to the improvement of the land. He meant that it had induced the agriculturist to invest capital in improvement. That opinion he still retained; but he did maintain that the change which was now proposed was much more likely to secure steady prices than under the present law. He did not believe that fluctuations could ever be altogether avoided, for as long as they had changeable seasons they would have fluctuations; but he believed that by a Free Trade in Corn, by the quantity which happened to be wanted, and which the interests of parties induced them to send to this country at the time when it was wanted, by its coming in equally at all times, would secure a greater steadiness of price than at present (hear, hear). The tendency of the sliding scale, and indeed of all protection, was to accumulate a vast quantity of corn, and to inundate the market, perhaps at the most inconvenient moment, by the introduction of a large quantity of grain when it was not wanted. It had been matter of complaint against the Government that no statement had been made of the probable results of this measure upon the price of corn (hear, hear). A more preposterous and unreasonable request was never made (cries of “oh, oh”)! During the discussions on the Corn Bills in 1815, 1822, 1828, and 1842, no one had pretended to say exactly what the price of corn would be. His Right Hon. Friend, in proposing the present measure, said it would be desirable that the averages should fluctuate between 54s. and 58s. But that had not been the case, and it was no encouragement to his Right Hon. Friend to venture another prophecy. Besides, under that measure there was a duty, but under the present one there was no duty at all (cries of “hear, hear” from the cross benches). He thanked their Lordships for the patience

with which they had heard him, and he would conclude by saying that he never gave a vote in his life with less hesitation than in voting for the second reading of this bill.

The MARQUIS OF NORMANBY explained.

The EARL OF HARDWICKE and EARL GREY having risen at the same time, there were loud cries for both; but the latter gave way, and the Earl of Hardwicke proceeded to express his regret that he should have been the means of preventing the House from hearing the Noble Earl; but he was anxious to take an opportunity of addressing their Lordships on the important question under consideration. Prologues preceded speeches, and so he must preface what remarks he had to offer by deploring the necessity under which he felt himself placed of expressing sentiments in opposition to those of the Noble Friends with whom he had hitherto been in alliance. It was a deep sense of public duty which compelled him to do so, though he by no means conceived that they had conducted themselves in a manner which would affect the opinion to be entertained of them as honourable men. From the high character and great talents which they had always displayed in the management of public affairs he had not the shadow of a doubt that everything they were now doing was done from a sincere desire to benefit the country, and from a conviction that their measures had that tendency. He would not argue the question otherwise than in the belief that it involved the interests of the whole community. Their Lordships were not more concerned in it than the humblest classes. The lower their gradation in the social scale, indeed, the more implicated were the interests of individuals. This question, if at all one between the rich and the poor, would more affect the poor than the rich. Who urged the question? Was it the rich or the poor? Was it not rich men who did so? (hear, hear.) Was it not an aristocracy? Would not a stranger say the two aristocratic parties were contending for power, and between them, the poor man was likely to be the sufferer? His Noble Friends, with whom he agreed on this question, were the protectors of the poor man. It was the power of wealth that was urging on this measure—it was the power of the steam engine, which with its wonderful and varied applications led the manufacturers to believe that they could flood the markets of the world. In the most democratic of countries America, the principles of protection were stedfastly maintained, He dated all the disasters of England from our having interfered in continental contests; and he could not but look upon it as an auspicious event that this country was at last, through the instrumentality of the illustrious Queen who now reigned over them, separated from Hanover. Sir R. Peel would have appealed to another Parliament but for the alleged necessity of an immediate legislation for the distress in Ireland; but that question was now disposed of: it was proved there was no famine; and it now became the imperative duty of their Lordships to let the question go for decision to the people of England (cheers).

The EARL OF WICKLOW moved the adjournment of the debate till Thursday.

After nearly half an hour's warm discussion of this point, the debate was adjourned till Thursday.

## THURSDAY, MAY 28.

EARL GREY rose to resume the debate. He said that were it not that he had for many years taken a deep interest and an active part in the discussion of the question, he would have stood aloof in this, probably the last battle to be fought betwixt Free Trade and monopoly. One of the reasons, however, which influenced him in rising was the feeling that a great impression had been made on the Lordships by the speech which they had listened to on the first night of the debate, from the Noble Lord the late Secretary for the Colonies, whose absence, from what he heard of the unfortunate cause of it, he very greatly lamented. His arguments were put with so much skill, and clothed in language of such extreme beauty, that for upwards of three hours he rivetted the attention of every Noble Lord who listened to him, and made listening to him—very different to what listening to many others was—not a labour, but a delight. He (Earl Grey) knew that some of the arguments in that speech had already been answered, especially by his Noble Friend who sat behind him. But it seemed to him that there were still portions of that speech to which it was requisite that their Lordships' attention should be particularly called. He was not vain or presumptuous enough to suppose that he was fitted to enter into the lists with his Noble Friend, but he had such confidence in the power of truth that he believed that even in his (Earl Grey's) feeble hands the cause which he advocated might be sufficiently recommended to their Lordships, and that he should be able to show to the satisfaction of the House that in some most important points of his Noble Friend's speech his Noble Friend was mistaken. Through the whole course of the debates it had struck him very forcibly that Noble Lords opposite had avoided an explicit avowal of that which he took to be the main object and aim of the Corn Laws. He thought it was clear that the real aim of those laws, and the object really intended by them, was to secure what was called a remunerating price for corn, or, in other words, to raise the price of food for the people by artificially restricting the supply (hear, hear). If, as he ventured to submit to their Lordships it was, this was the real object of all these laws, it was one which required stronger arguments to prove its expediency. His Noble Friend who sat behind him, had said that upon a bare calculation of the amount to which prices might be expected to fall when the Corn Laws were repealed, the existence of a Corn Law could not be considered as imposing a tax of less than £10,000,000 sterling upon the people of this country (hear, hear). This charge was double the amount of the income-tax, and double that of the malt-tax, and it was imposed, as his Noble Friend justly observed, not for the purposes of the State, for not one farthing came into the Exchequer, but for the imaginary interests of a particular class. He said the imaginary interests of a class, because he really believed that the landholders themselves shared greatly in the evils which the existence of a Corn Law produced. Their Lordships had been told, however, that this statement was an unfair representation of the fact, and that admitting that the price of corn was raised by a Corn Law, and admitting also that the payment of a higher price for food would in itself be a burden to the working-classes, still they were not really

Injured by the protection which was given to agriculture, because the effect of the existing law was to keep up the wages of labour in the same proportion as it raised the price of corn. This was the great argument used by his Noble Friend who spoke on Monday night. Now, it was clear that in the first instance, at all events, an increase in the price of food was a tax on the income of the working population, and, therefore, before they determined to maintain the law on the ground that the labouring classes were compensated for this tax by a corresponding rise in their wages, they ought to be very sure that this was the fact. This point, however, which lay at the root of the matter, was very lightly passed over by his Noble Friend. His Noble Friend argued that if the prices of corn were reduced, wages also would be brought down, and the labouring population would be no more gainers whatever by the reduction in the price of food. That was certainly a very easy way of disposing of the question, but it was not satisfactory to his (Earl Grey's) mind, and his Noble Friend had made an admission in the course of his speech which seemed to him (Earl Grey) to lead to a directly opposite conclusion. His Noble Friend admitted that wages did not vary year by year with the price of corn. He said that in cheap years the labourer had no doubt a temporary advantage; and that, as in dear years, wages did not instantly rise in a corresponding ratio with the price of corn, he was for some time a considerable sufferer. The experience, however, which they had in the last few years was perfectly decisive upon that question. He would compare the years 1833, 1834, and 1835, when corn was plentiful, with the years 1839, 1840, and 1841, when it was dear. In the first of these triennial periods trade was good, there was a great demand for labour, and wages were consequently high. In the years 1839, 1840, and 1841, trade was slack, there was very little demand for labour, and wages were low. The condition of the country at that time was too recent, and made too great an impression, to require him to dwell upon it. There could be no doubt that the difficulties experienced in these bad years could be easily accounted for. When corn rose to a very high price, every family throughout the kingdom was obliged to spend a larger portion of its income on food than was the case in other years. There was, therefore, less of available income for other purposes. There was less demand for clothing, less demand for tea and sugar, and less demand for manufactures. The trade of the manufacturers and the merchants fell off, and consequently there was a general diminution of their power of employing labour, and a general diminution in the power of production. His Noble Friend admitted this to be the working of high prices for corn, and he (Earl Grey) wanted to know what ground there was for supposing that any difference would occur if high prices became permanent instead of temporary. He believed that if the price of food was permanently high the result would be the same as that produced by occasional high prices, namely, that less employment would be given, leading of course to low wages. On the contrary, if low prices prevailed, industry was better employed—there was a great demand for labour, and wages rose. This was the conclusion which he thought they had a right to infer from simple reasoning; but the correctness of that

reasoning was borne out by the fact that when their Lordships looked to other countries, where there was permanent plenty and a low price of food, unless there were some counteracting circumstances, wages were invariably high. He observed that a Noble Marquis denied that conclusion, but he hoped that if there were any defect in the chain of reasoning by which he had arrived at that conclusion, it might be pointed out to him before the termination of the debate. If such, however, was really the operation of the Corn Law on the condition of the labourers, that fact in itself ought to be conclusive. As a Christian legislature, if they were only satisfied of that fact, no other argument ought to be necessary to induce them to sweep away these restrictions altogether. He believed that all the calculations which had been made of the price at which corn could be sold in this country, if protection were taken away, were made without proper *data*; and he could not help advert to a statement made by his Noble Friend (Lord Stanley) which had been furnished to his Noble Friend by a high practical authority. His Noble Friend told the House that there were two cargoes of wheat at Liverpool, which his correspondent had purchased at 23s. 6d. a quarter. Now, as this statement seemed to him to be a specimen of those which had been made upon this part of the question, he would read a short extract from a letter which he had received from Liverpool:—"It is perfectly true that Lord Stanley's correspondent holds two cargoes of wheat, imported from the Danube, which cost him the price named in his letter. The natural inference is, that wheat can be shipped from the Danube at 14s. per quarter, free on board. Nothing, however, could be more fallacious. The cargoes in question were ordered in 1844 from Ibrail by a house in Manchester, by whom they were sold at a loss of 10s. a quarter. The original cost was about 33s. per quarter, including freight; but (thanks to the glorious uncertainty of the sliding scale) they were too late to be released at the lowest point of duty in that year, and were sold to the said gentleman at 23s. 6d. Now, to adduce this as any evidence of the shipping prices of wheat is equally absurd and unfair. As regards Hungary, and other countries contiguous to the Mediterranean, Lord Stanley's ideas of their capabilities of supply are a mere chimera." When the tariff was under consideration, the greatest possible apprehensions were entertained by some as to the effect which the permission to introduce foreign cattle was calculated to produce upon the price of corn. It was stated that if stock were allowed to come in from foreign countries free from duty, the effect of such an alteration would be virtually to repeal the Corn Laws, for the same agricultural produce which could be produced cheaply in foreign countries, could be sent into this country in the more portable shape of fat stock. That argument would be very forcible and well founded if corn could in reality be produced so cheaply in foreign countries as those who relied on the argument presumed. If such were the case, cheap agricultural produce could indeed be introduced in the more portable shape of fat sheep and oxen. They all knew that the apprehension as to the effect of the reduction of duty on stock, as regarded agricultural produce, was quite fallacious, and had now altogether passed away. His Noble Friend (Lord Stanley)

dwelt very forcibly upon the argument which had been used by some, that the present high price of cattle was owing to the tariff; and he (Earl Grey) must remark that notwithstanding the fears which were entertained, four years' experience of the tariff had altogether disproved the assertion that the introduction of foreign cattle would have the effect of lowering the price of cattle, the produce of our own country. If it were capable of producing any such tendency, it might have produced it at the end of four years at least to some extent; and yet within the last year the supply of cattle from abroad was not sufficient to check the tendency to a rise in price which prevailed in our own markets, whilst the few thousand head of cattle exported from Germany had produced a sensible effect upon the markets of that country, so that in many of the German towns the price of the fat stock was within a small degree as high as in this country. Similar apprehensions had been indulged in with respect to the reduction of the duty upon flax; and, in fact, of all the important articles of agricultural produce which were included in the tariff. But although flax was more valuable in proportion to its bulk than corn, yet subsequent experience had proved that the British growers of flax had no just cause of fear from foreign competition. His Noble Friend (Lord Stanley) had asked those who were in favour of restriction on the importation of corn, what advantage would come of it, if, as they stated, it would not considerably reduce the price of bread? His Noble Friend thought on that occasion that he had reduced the advocates of Free Trade in corn to a dilemma from which they could not escape. It seemed rather a probable argument in the beginning, but if they looked closely to it what became of it? It was quite fallacious. For his part, he (Earl Grey) did not assert that there would be a great fall in the price of corn, and he was one of the advocates for the removal of restriction. He did not think it would cause as low a price as 36s. per quarter, which they all had witnessed in the last week of December, 1835, nor did he think it would produce as high a price as 81s. 6d., which corn had reached, as their Lordships would recollect, in the week ending the 11th of January, 1839. But this he expected, that whilst neither that high price nor that low price would be the natural result of the alteration in the law, an average price would be produced by it, but not greatly lower than the average of the last twelve years, and that the price of corn would invariably fluctuate within narrower limits than it does under the present system. The fact of its fluctuating less would be in itself a most important advantage, for it would be admitted on all hands that great benefit would arise from a more steady price. One of the greatest advantages which a civilized country could possess over barbarous countries was its power of preventing those great variations in supply which barbarous countries were apt to suffer from, the latter having at one time a superabundant supply of the necessaries of life, and suffering the utmost distress at another period from a deficient supply of food (hear, hear). Civilized countries, by the natural operations of commerce, enjoyed very great advantages as regarded the steadiness of supply. By those natural operations of commerce, mercantile men, for their own interest, would buy corn in cheap years for the purpose of selling it

in dear years; and according to this beautiful system, if it were not interfered with by law, the prices would be to a great extent regulated, the alterations would be checked, and the suffering which must result from an insufficient supply would be removed without injury to any class (cheers). The wholesome operation of this system we had prevented by our own interference, by the operation of an artificial law. It appeared from evidence before the agricultural committee of 1836, that at a former period, when a different state of the law rendered dealing in corn less hazardous than it is at present, there was usually in this country a stock on hand of six months' consumption; but such had been the effect of the law of 1815, in rendering the corn trade hazardous, that the usual stock on hand now at the same period of the year was a fortnight's consumption. What had caused that? It was caused by a law which rendered the trade in corn a sort of gambling transaction (hear, hear). His Noble Friend (Lord Stanley), adduced the case of Ireland, which being an exporting instead of an importing country, would necessarily suffer a great deal from the proposed measure. He (Earl Grey) could show their Lordships that no part of the United Kingdom would gain so largely from the passing of this law as the sister kingdom; but he had already gone so largely into the question that he would not enter upon the subject of its probable effect upon Ireland at that stage of the bill, and he would now direct the attention of their Lordships to another point, which had been dwelt upon very forcibly by his Noble Friend on Monday night. The Noble Lord produced a great impression on the House by describing the effect which this measure would be likely to create upon the condition of our colonies and upon our interests as connected with the maintenance of our colonial possessions. That was a subject of very great importance, and he (Earl Grey) was so impressed with the high value which ought to be laid on the preservation of our colonial empire, that he believed if this law would shake the security of that empire, or its connection with the mother country, it would deserve the gravest consideration before they agreed to repeal the present system of Protection. He, however, entertained unhesitatingly the conviction that, so far from being a disadvantage to the colonies—so far from having a tendency to weaken the ties which unite them to us, the adoption, in the largest sense and in the most complete manner, of the principles of commercial freedom, was the policy of all others, which was best calculated to strengthen those ties (loud cheers). His Noble Friend had asked, that if the colonists were told that they were no more to this country than Frenchmen or Dutchmen, what inducement would they have to wish to be united to this country? To that he (Earl Grey) would answer, that his Noble Friend should recollect that by this measure it was not proposed to apply the principle of the removal of restriction to the colonies exclusively; but it was merely intended to apply to them a principle which we proposed to apply to ourselves (hear, hear). Would any one say that Cumberland and Yorkshire would be treated badly by this measure because we did not leave them a protective duty (hear, hear)? If our own counties, then, were to be treated in the same manner by this bill as the colonies, then the

colonies had no reason to complain. He could understand how some persons in the old country, where there was a great competition for employment, could be induced to take a narrow view of the subject, and thus he could see how it was that many persons had been induced to form the opinion that Protection was an advantage, and that it was not wise to let in foreign goods to compete with our home market, but with respect to the colonies there was no such difficulty as that competition for employment (hear). On the contrary, in every one of our own colonies, the great difficulty was to find sufficient labour to develop fully its natural resources; and if the effect of the proposed system should be to divert labour in the colonies to its natural and most productive channels, instead of to artificial and unproductive channels, there could be no doubt that it would be an advantage to our colonies (hear, hear). Could any one doubt that Canada was poorer now than she would have been if there never had been a protective duty in favour of her timber (hear, hear)? If, instead of letting into our markets bad timber, when we could have had good, we had never adopted that system, Canada would be better off; and the same principle would apply to all our colonies. The colonies had received no advantage from protecting duties, whilst in many cases those duties had been directly injurious to them. The West Indies had suffered from not having been allowed to get their necessities in the cheapest market, or to send their supplies in the cheapest form to this country. They gained nothing by Protection, and as regarded the effect of commercial dependence in strengthening the ties between the colonies and this country, he would put it to their Lordships whether the system of commercial dependence had in reality strengthened the ties between the colonies and the mother country. Did they not all know that jealousy, arising from that commercial dependence, had produced that American war, which ended in the loss of those extensive colonies to the Crown of this country (hear, hear)? He would not say that in their present state of importance those states would have been kept in dependence on the British Crown; but they might have parted from us in a different manner, and without leaving any feeling of jealousy towards the mother country, if it had not been for commercial dependence (hear, hear). He was rather surprised that his Noble Friend, in the course of his speech, touched on the colonies for an illustration; for he thought that the principle with respect to trade which he had adopted towards the colonies was not, to say the least of it, very fortunate. Under that policy the corn of Canada, was allowed into this country at a nominal duty, whilst that advantage was not given to any other colony. That advantage had been given to Canada almost avowedly because it had been recently in a state of rebellion, but it was refused to those which had been always obedient and loyal; and he (Earl Grey) thought that such a course of policy was calculated to excite a spirit of disaffection (hear, hear). His Noble Friend asked, if we were to have no advantage in the markets of the colonies, of what use were they to us? He would be permitted to say that such a mode of argument was rather defective. It was those who defended Protection who were to prove that it was good; but how did they

prove it? They said that if they did not keep up Protection they would lose the colonies. They said they kept the colonies by a protective duty, and they then turned round and said, if they did not keep up Protection, of what use were the colonies? That was a specimen of what was called arguing in a circle. He believed that the connection between the colonies and the mother country was a mutual advantage, requiring no such support to maintain it. In our colonial empire we possessed friends and allies in every quarter of the globe—we had thus a large population in various parts of the world, possessing great natural resources, united heart and soul with us, ready to take part with us in all our conflicts—and thus we maintained in each possession a garrison of the cheapest kind, whilst they gloried in the security of being an integral part of the greatest and most enlightened, and most civilised nation upon the face of the earth (hear, hear, and cheers). They gloried—and he knew that they felt it as a glory in calling themselves British subjects, and in having their interests and rights protected by the power of this country, which was ready to be called forth to maintain their interests when it was required (hear). He believed that if they pursued a liberal policy in other respects towards the colonies, by extending to them the dearest rights of Englishmen, the privilege of self-government, and not needlessly interfering in their domestic concerns—that if they adopted a sound policy, politically as well as commercially, they would bind them with a chain which no power on earth could break. My Noble Friend (Lord Stanley), in the course of his speech, went on to say, that if we consented to pass this measure, we must be content in future to be regarded as a subordinate part of the constitution—as the registrars of the edicts of the House of Commons. But my Noble Friend went on in the same breath to describe, in most beautiful and glowing language, the real purpose of this House. “My Lords,” he said, “if I know anything of the constitution and the value of this House, it is that it should interpose a wholesome and salutary obstacle to rash and inconsiderate legislation. It is to protect the people against the consequences of their own imprudence. It is not, my Lords, it never has been, and never should be, to resist the expression of continued and deliberately-formed public opinion—to that your Lordships have always, and I trust always will, bow; but it is yours to check the progress of hasty and irreparable legislation.” In those words my Noble Friend, with his usual happiness of expression, detailed most accurately our proper place in the constitution of the country. As he told you, it is our office to check the progress of hasty and irreparable legislation, but not to oppose ourselves to continued and deliberately-formed public opinion (hear). It is therefore of the deepest importance that we should discriminate between the cases. That we should distinguish accurately when the desire of the country for a change in the law does proceed from a hasty and inconsiderate passion for alteration, and when it rests on a continued and deliberately-formed opinion. It is of the deepest importance that we should accurately distinguish between these two cases, because if we make a mistake, if under the notion that we are opposing hasty legislation we do set ourselves against deliberately-

formed and rational opinion, it is perfectly clear we must give way, and that by so giving way we seriously stake and impair our proper authority and power in those cases in which they really may be exercised with advantage to the country and to the constitution. In this case, then, it is your duty to determine whether the desire of the people, as represented by the votes of the House of Commons, is founded on a deliberately-formed opinion, or whether it is the cry of hasty and inconsiderate legislation. Let me ask you, what are the symptoms by which we are to judge? Let me remind you, in order that you may form an opinion on this point, which lies at the very bottom of the decision which you are this night to come to—let me remind you what are the symptoms which lead to the inference that the desire of the nation rests on a continued and deliberately-formed opinion. I will remind you, then, that the principles on which this bill was formed were first brought under the consideration of the public so long as eighty years ago, when the first edition of Dr. Adam Smith's immortal work was published, in which he laid down, with a force of reasoning which the experience of succeeding years has fully justified, that it was wise and just to emancipate commerce from all artificial restrictions. It was not long in working conviction in the minds of all theoretical men; every political philosopher in every quarter of the globe was soon found adhering to that principle; but it was long before those engaged in the practical affairs of life would concede it—before practical statesmen and manufacturers and farmers would consent to admit the validity of the doctrines of Adam Smith. But at length they did begin to yield, the authority of those maxims of commercial wisdom which had long been received as infallible by philosophers in their closets, began also to be recognised in the councils of the nation; at first in a hesitating and timid manner, but still a silent and gradual advance was being made to their consummation. As discussion went on, as the good effects were experienced of the partial measures which had been founded on those principles, more and more converts came over (cheers). In Parliament and in the country, every succeeding year showed an increase of strength to that great cause of truth and of reason (hear). In my own recollection of political life how vast are the changes which I have seen on this subject! Nineteen years ago, when I first voted on these questions in the other House of Parliament, in favour of a very timid application of Free Trade principles, I have voted in very small minorities; in minorities as small as 15, and never, I think, greatly exceeding 50; whilst those who were for out and out protection, who resisted the Corn Law of 1828 almost as strongly as the proposed measure is now resisted, doubled us and trebled us in the divisions, so powerful was the extreme agricultural party in that day. We now see that year by year, from that time to the present, the strength of the party in favour of the bolder and bolder application of the principles of Free Trade has been gradually increasing; and in the last few years, though we have still had large numerical majorities arrayed against us in divisions, yet no man who attended to the debates in the other House of Parliament, no man who looked at the signs from which to judge of other men's feelings, could have failed to foresee symptoms of the rapid approach of that event

which has now arrived. Our opponents spoke in the tone of men who felt conscious of defeat, like men who felt that their struggle could not longer be maintained ; and last of all we see her Majesty's Ministers themselves coming forward and manfully avowing a complete change in their own opinions, a complete adherence to the doctrines of Free Trade (hear). Severely as they have been censured, I, my Lords, give them credit for that avowal. I have no doubt it is a sincere and an honest avowal (hear, hear). There is no reason why it should be otherwise. Their party interest and their personal feelings would have led them, consistently with their sense of public duty, to have maintained their former opinions ; and when I find them unable to do so, it is, I say, indeed a strong proof of the irresistible current of public opinion (hear, hear). You may say the reasons that they have assigned for the change are altogether inadequate, that the potato famine is a delusion, and that there is nothing in the state of affairs to justify such a measure. You may say the arguments which they use are precisely the same arguments which they themselves had so often combated. You may say all this, but I do not think you will inquire what were the motives which led these gentlemen to hold other opinions on former debates. I do not wish to inquire whether it was a want of foresight or a want of moral courage to avow opinions which, though unpopular, made them in 1839 and 1841 still the advocates of protection. Whatever opinions we may form upon this point, it is impossible any rational man can doubt that the change which they have now avowed is sincere—and that they feel the repeal of the existing Corn Laws to be required by the best interests of the country (cheers). And I say their adopting that opinion, their coming forward to advocate it, and their sacrifices for it, is a convincing and a striking proof of what is the state of public opinion on this question. Out of doors are precisely the same symptoms (hear, hear). Do we not remember that out of doors at one time the merchants and manufacturers of this country were as strongly in favour of protection as the agriculturists are at this day ? Were they not the main originators of the whole protective policy ? (hear, hear, hear.) They, I believe, are perfectly willing to admit the fact. This great mistake in our national policy is far more attributable to the mercantile and manufacturing interests than the agricultural, and when I first came into public life this was the general state of public opinion. I remember Mr. Huskisson being regarded as a public enemy in the great sea-port towns in the north of England, and the repeal of the discriminating duties on foreign shipping being considered as something like treason to the best interests of the country. From those very towns, in the present session of Parliament, I have presented petitions praying your Lordships not only to pass this bill, but to abolish all protective duties whatever (cheers). Such, my Lords, are the symptoms of the desire of the nation for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and it is not a desire for rash and hasty legislation, but it is the continued, the deliberately formed, and the rationally expressed public judgment (cheers). These measures, I say, are the symptoms of it, and public opinion being so, it is not according to my Noble Friend's own admission, wise in this House to disregard it (hear).

My Lords, that you will not disregard it, and that you will pass this bill by an overwhelming majority, is no less my firm and confident expectation than it is my fervent and earnest hope (cheers).

LORD ASHBURTON said he would endeavour to confine himself, in the few observations with which he would trouble their Lordships, to what he conceived would be the general political position of this country as the results of the passing of this measure. After all the attention he had been able to give it, particularly after the speech of his Noble Friend on Tuesday night—considering also the present position of this country, and the power it possessed of paying its debts, he should say that nothing but difficulty and danger appeared to him as the result of the passing of this measure to the country (hear, hear). He might be mistaken in the views he had taken, but, as he had said before, the result of all the attention he had been able to give it was, that he had been compelled to come to no other conclusion than that he had already mentioned. His views upon this question were the result of forty years' experience, during which time he had ample opportunities of judging of the results of great legislative experiments. In the year 1815, he was a strenuous opponent of any great alteration in the Corn Laws, at a time when the protecting price of corn was at 80s. He then opposed it because he considered it as a wild and ill-considered measure; and it was rather remarkable that his Noble Friend, who had introduced this measure to the House, was one of the most strenuous advocates the Opposition then had, and the result of which was that his house had actually been plundered by the mob (hear, hear). In the month of May, 1825, there were 400,000 quarters of wheat in bond, and Mr. Huskisson proposed to let that quantity into consumption to meet the apprehended scarcity, but in doing so he had adopted the precaution of letting it out only in such quantities as would meet the apprehended scarcity, while no mischief would be sensibly felt as to the result. But what was the present Government going to do? They had now nearly 2,000,000 quarters of corn in bond, and the result of the passing of this measure would be to let that enormous quantity of grain in upon the country, at a time too when there was a fair prospect of an abundant harvest (hear, hear). The object of this measure was not to regulate the affairs of this country on reasonable, prudent, and just principles: its object was in fact to deprive the country of that happiness which it had hitherto enjoyed under the system of protection. The measure militated against that which had existed at all times and in all countries (hear, hear). Their Lordships might be aware that there was no period in the history of this country when there was not some regulation with regard to the admission of foreign corn (hear, hear). The British Legislature had always thought—even from the time of the conquest—proper to deal with that subject; and they must recollect that during the last 150 years much capital had been invested in the great business of farming, and that by the aid of that capital the land of this country had been much improved. All that capital had been expended for the worthy purposes of fertilizing the English soil; but if this measure were passed, the thousands and thousands of pounds that had been so expended would be rendered useless and lost. Of all authorities on

political questions in this time, he had always been more disposed to pay the greatest respect to the opinions of Mr. Huskisson, and particularly on the subject of Free Trade and protection to agriculture. He stated that nothing could be more dangerous to the safeguard and tranquillity of the country than to admit foreign corn free from all regulations. Almost all had changed their opinions on this subject, and yet they were called upon to adopt such a destructive measure as this at the suggestion of men who had themselves changed their opinions on the subject of Free Trade (hear, hear). He did not know when Mr. Huskisson died, but he thought it was in 1822 (a Noble Lord—"In 1830"). Mr. Huskisson, however, at that time advocated a reduction in what was called the protective duties, and he said, "It has, I understand, been quoted against me, that I hold an opinion that England ought not to depend too largely upon other countries for its supply of corn—I maintained that opinion in 1815 and I maintain that opinion now" (cheers). He also said, "I am anxious to render this country, commercially as well as politically, independent of foreigners, and I therefore think that it is not prudent to suffer the free admission of foreign corn into this country." Every wise statesman, in every nation of the world, maintained the same opinions, because they well knew the danger of allowing their country ever to be dependent on foreigners for the supply of food (hear, hear). It might, perhaps, be well to argue that this measure would be a benefit for all the world; but were they to become the advocates of the human race, and to be concerned with the affairs of all mankind? He thought the more prudent course would be to be concerned with only our own affairs (hear, hear). The Noble Earl who proposed this subject told the House that all Europe was going to follow the example set them by the Free Traders of England. The measure met with great praise and admiration, but every one said that it did not exactly suit them. It was not in the nature of things that every country was to assimilate and hold the same opinions with regard to these points. And even let all the world be of one opinion with respect to their Free Trade operations, he questioned very much whether all the world would be any better for those opinions. The entire of the civilized world was divided into states, provinces, and kingdoms, placed under different governments, and it was very desirable that, as far as possible, they should have mutual opinions on different points, and a general amalgamation of interests, as it were, to prevent war, and conserve the good of mankind. What would be the result if the principles of Free Trade could be universally established? This country might become a large manufacturing shop, but its agricultural interests would be neglected, and foreign countries would laugh in their sleeves—this country being dependent on them for the supply of food—at the threatened destruction of boasted British independence and the dissolution of its interests. That which was desirable for all countries was, that they should have every description of industry and of international commerce, so that each in its own resources would not be left wholly dependent upon another. The aristocracy of that House, and the great gentry in the country, would be interested in preserving the protection in which they had so long and so eminently flourished. If however their

Lordships should be of opinion, notwithstanding the great prosperity which had attended the system of protection, that the interests of the country require the concession of their cherished opinions they would yield it, although, perhaps, with regret, yet with the hope that it would be for the benefit of the country. But do not let their Lordships think that any such anticipated benefit would be derived from this measure or that its consequence would tend in any way to the general interests. It was a great mistake to suppose that any measure which had for its object the destruction of those principles which had raised the country to its present paramount position would result otherwise than in universal dissatisfaction and contempt for the authors of the measure.

The MARQUIS OF LANSDOWNE said he rose in that stage of the debate, which was now the third, and he hoped the last, night of the debate to express his sentiments on the measure now under consideration. He should promise them that he would not detain them for a long time in the observations he was about to make, and he should be extremely sorry that any Noble Lord should be prevented giving his opinion before their final decision was taken. Before entering with his Noble Friend (Lord Ashburton) into the commercial phase of the question, he would say a few words on two points, which require to be considered as necessary and preliminary to the consideration of the general question. The first point was the political aspect of the question, which was referred to by the Noble Lord the late Secretary for the Colonies, and also the Noble Lord who last addressed the House. The importance of being independent of foreign nations for the supply of food, and the political dangers of that dependence. The gigantic influence of Napoleon extended all over Europe. He employed every commercial means to ruin this country, and prevent a supply of food, but human interest was stronger than the power of Bonaparte, and his policy was defeated (cheers). Look at the price of corn then, and contrast it with what it might have been had that policy been successful? But corn was coming in all the time. The power of Napoleon, great and paramount as it then was, did not succeed; had it done so, corn, instead of selling at 105s. a quarter would have been 150s (hear, hear). If no corn had come in, ruin would have overtaken not only those engaged in manufactures, but the farmers also. That importation of foreign corn was necessary to save the labouring classes from starvation and the farmers from ruin. But what said the Noble Lord, and the Noble Lord opposite, following him in the same line of argument, in talking of the danger of depending on foreign countries for a supply of food? They rested their case in respect of this point on the present sliding scale. Now, in his opinion if there was one law so contrived more than another to create this danger it was the sliding scale (hear, hear),—because, under the operation of a fixed duty, or Free Trade, they could regulate the quantity of corn from foreign countries that might be required, and what corn growers in those countries might readily expect in regard to the supply. But with a sliding scale, they proclaimed their danger, as far as scarcity was concerned, to all foreign countries, and if those countries, as had been represented, were disposed to conspire against this country, they

could easily do it, for at the very moment when the sliding scale proclaimed the scarcity of corn in this country, they could easily take off the supplies, and reduce the country to starvation (hear, hear). He was persuaded there was infinitely more danger in the sliding scale than in any other system of law that could be adopted. Yet this system had been proclaimed by Noble Lords on the other side. His Noble Friend who last addressed their Lordships had told them that Mr. Huskisson had once given an opinion in favour of the protective system. Now, in his opinion, one of the greatest benefits Mr. Huskisson conferred on this country was doing away with the duty on silk (hear, hear). Mr. Huskisson was terribly reviled for that act, but Mr. Huskisson said he would persevere, notwithstanding he might be called hard-hearted, and the result proved most triumphant, for at the time the charge was made there were only 200,000 lbs. of silk manufactured in this country, while now there were 600,000 (hear, hear). His Noble Friend the late Secretary for the Colonies had boldly declared that the abolition of protection had proved highly injurious to the shipping trade, but they had never heard of an attempt on the part of interested parties to restore the whole system. His Noble Friend, however, must have looked at a wrong paper, or he would not have made the statement he did. His Noble Friend had stated that there had been a positive diminution of English tonnage in the year 1845, but he found from a very carefully prepared and tolerably accurate paper, which had been lately laid upon their Lordship's table, that in the year 1832 there was an increase of 2,618,000 tons, as compared with the period when the duty had been reduced. But there was a subsequent reduction of duties, and yet with this reduction the number stood thus—in 1832, the tonnage of England was 1,936,000 tons, while in the year 1845, it was 3,660,000 tons (hear, hear). He could hardly believe then that the shipping trade was suffering under the relaxation of protection, and nothing, he thought, could be more conclusive in favour of this bill than the figures he had given (hear, hear). But it was said the shipping trade of foreign countries had increased since the abolition of protection. Well, he admitted it, and gloried in the result. He was rejoiced to hear that these measures had been conducive to advance the interest of other countries as well as their own, and God forbid that it should ever be objected to any measure that it was calculated to lead to such a result (cheers). In the year 1785, Mr. Pitt, in his statement of Political Economy, did not consider it as strange to his principle, when he endeavoured to avail himself he did not see any great success liable to result from its application. He entertained a commercial proposition for a Free Trade with Ireland; that was founded on a principle of improvements in commerce. There were not wanting persons of high authority, like him; and people out of doors, who then, as now, saw in the adoption of this proposition the ruin and destruction of England. A near relative of my Noble Friend (Colonel Stanley), whom he had the honour to know, came forward on that occasion, and presented a petition enforcing it, in which he stated what the petitioners stated—that they desired to be heard by counsel, for that was about to be done which would put the finishing stroke to the cotton manufac-

of England. It was the admission of Irish fustians and cottons which caused this alarm, and they stated that the working people, manufacturers, and their children, would be sacrificed. The petition was not adopted, and what was the event? These cottons were admitted, and he certainly regretted to say, that Ireland did not now produce enough for her own consumption; for since that time the cotton manufacture of England was greatly increased. The commerce of this country had undergone various improvements and alterations, all of which were to have seriously injured it; but they had always ended by the commerce of the country finding itself, after the lapse of a few years, in a higher position than it had attained before. Therefore, he again said, that he thought that experience was rather against than in favour of Protection. He knew that it could be said by many that they were prepared to abandon everything if the principle of it were not for the farmers of England. Nothing could be more erroneous than to suppose that the farmers, with all the advantages of the wealth and prosperity of this country—with a growing population—derived their subsistence from the sickly atmosphere of protection instead of their own industry and labour. His Noble Friend had said that Mr. Huskisson was the wisest of our commercial statesmen, and said, that he refused his authority to confirm these opinions. He would beg leave to read some remarkable passages in the last speech of Mr. Huskisson. He (Mr. Huskisson) had said that to whatever extent they attributed to other evils the present state of the country, the Corn Laws were themselves a burthen and a restraint upon the manufactures and the commerce of the country. How was it possible for his Noble Friend, after he had read that speech in 1830, deliberately to come down to the House and quote the authority of Mr. Huskisson as entertaining views coinciding with his own in condemning the Corn Laws. He was of opinion with Mr. Huskisson, though not his earlier opinion, but in his latter opinion, that the Corn Laws were an impediment to the progress of manufacture. He contended, therefore, that all restrictions when removed had been followed by an immense increase in the production of those articles. If those persons who fancied that the removal of restrictions would have reduced this country from its proud pre-eminence to the lowest state of degradation, and if they were to rush to those scenes where desolation and ruin were expected, and thought they would see nothing but ruin, desolation, misery, and wretchedness, they would be surprised at seeing an immense district in a most flourishing and happy condition. He was told that they thought too little of the home market to the agricultural interest. All fears with reference to the removal of protection in the manufacturing districts and the county of Lancashire, have, according to accounts which he had lately received, been entirely removed. He would call their Lordships' attention to the immense increase which had taken place in the value of manufactured goods as compared with agricultural. In the former case, the increase had been 6,300 per cent., whereas agriculture had advanced only 3,500 per cent. He therefore considered it very short-sighted not to consider the manufacturing interests as part of the national prosperity of the country. He could never bring himself to consider the prosperity

of manufactures as a sort of morbid secretion which the State physician was to keep down by a restrictive regimen. On the contrary, he considered that the freest scope should be given to manufactures, and that the workmen should be enabled to obtain their food at the cheapest possible price (hear, hear). He thought that a fixed duty was preferable to the alterations now proposed, and he did so because of the advantage which would accrue to the revenue of the customs; and because he wished that in all great changes the prejudices and sentiments of all should be consulted, and not suddenly interfered with. By adopting it, the change would be gradual and moderate, and prove satisfactory to the agricultural interest. Those were his opinions some time since; and if he had the settlement of the question now, those would be his opinions still (hear, hear). The question which he had now to answer was, whether he would adopt that principle when the Bill went into committee. He had no hesitation in answering that he would not, because, though he might be nominally voting for such an amendment, if it were possible, he would be really voting against the bill; and the consequence, he firmly believed, would be, that instead of a fixed duty being eventually passed, their Lordships would be called upon to pass a totally different bill (hear, hear). His hopes, as connected with the fall or rise of provisions, in consequence of this measure, were not up to the depression which was predicted on the one side, nor to the exaggeration on the other. The way he thought it would operate would be by a gradual and certain increase of commerce which would be placed on a more solid foundation (hear, hear).

The EARL OF ESSEX said he had come to the conclusion he entertained with anxious deliberations of great doubt, and he did not found them on the opinions of the Brights and Cobdens of Manchester, but upon thorough conviction. He had had much doubt as to the repeal of these laws, and he should still feel much doubt in his mind were it not that the opinions of her Majesty's Ministers had brought forward such arguments as they did in support of the repeal of the restriction on the trade and commerce of the country. But whatever doubts he had on his mind as to these laws they were removed, and he now had none (hear, hear). But long before this measure was brought forward, he was of opinion that the cheapening of corn would be of great benefit to the farmers, for it would allow them the means of fattening cattle at a much more remunerative rate than at present (hear, hear). He was also of opinion that this measure would greatly improve the sale of cattle, and he was sure that they should all live to see the benefit of the repeal of the Corn Laws to this country (hear). He was not one of those who impressed upon the people that this was a measure which would be of great benefit to the country. He did not seek to be popular by using such arguments, but he was not for making the people believe that high prices were for the benefit of the people. He was for making the farmers believe that the new system of farming was the better; and he was for impressing on them the necessity of doing away with the old and antiquated system of farming. For himself he would only say, that even if he had not changed his opinion upon this subject he would never have joined in the outcry which had been raised against

perhaps the most eminent statesman who had ever ruled the destinies of this great country. Whatever, therefore, might be the fate of this measure, whether it were to pass into a law, or whether it were to be rejected by their Lordships, this country still would be deeply indebted to that Minister for the series of admirable measures he had brought forward, and for his endeavours to raise the country from the slough of despondency in which he had found it (immense cheering). The present measure was admitted by all to be not a factious one; it possessed in itself all the elements of success; and even if it should disappoint the expectations which had been formed of it, the country would acquit that Minister of any blame in consequence. It would increase the comforts of the labouring classes, it would extend the advantages of commerce, which under the protective system had been paralyzed, and when time should have obliterated all party feelings, the name of this Minister would be looked up to by all posterity with gratitude and admiration. He should give his hearty support to this measure.

The EARL OF EGLINTON said, that since he had the honour of seconding the Address to her Majesty's speech from the throne, he had never obtruded himself upon the notice of the House further than by addressing very few words to their Lordships, and, therefore, he trusted they would excuse him on the present occasion. Like the Noble Earl, who had just sat down, he (Lord Eglinton) had no doubt of the propriety of the course he was pursuing, but, unlike him, he had not changed his opinions (cheers and counter cheers), for he had adhered to those Conservative principles which, from the very first, he had advocated. He doubted not that it would be a wise and temperate course to modify opinions in order to insure the unanimity of a party, but there was a point beyond which they could not go, and where a blind obedience to the dictum of a leader would be most reprehensible. He was of opinion that they had reached that point, and when they found the leader who had, in times gone past, inculcated those principles, prostituting his excellent talents, and deserting those principles and the party who held them, he considered that further obedience to him would be most reprehensible. As hereditary guardians of the people, as the protectors of their rights, as Peers of Great Britain, he called upon them to reject this bill (hear, hear). He besought the Noble Duke, without whose assent this bill could not appear before their Lordships, he besought him to stand forth once more as the protector of that country which he had so often saved. He called upon the Noble Lords opposite who adhered to those principles of protection, which they had always advocated in common with himself though they differed very materially on other points. Laws might be re-enacted, statutes might be repealed, but character once gone could never be regained. He besought their Lordships not to share in the degradation which this ill-omened measure had brought upon the public character of British statesmen (cheers)—and which he feared would cast a foul blot upon them in after ages (cheers).

LORD BEAUMONT said, if, my Lords, in the few remarks which I feel it my duty to address to you, I do not dwell on that portion of the subject on which so much stress has been made in other parts of

this discussion, I mean that strange change of opinion which has come over certain Noble Lords, I trust you will not impute it, by my silence on that subject, to any small value that I may be supposed to put upon the consistency of character in public men. I feel as much as any man the shock which public morality must have received by this uncalled-for and injurious measure. And if the question of the conduct of the Government were brought forward separately, I myself would move a resolution, the object of which would be to reprobate their conduct, for on such a subject I would feel it my duty to vote for such a resolution as that (hear, hear). But on the present occasion, my Lords, I would confine myself to the subject before you, because it is my wish that this subject should be treated on its own merits. I wish, my Lords, to come to a consideration, whether or no, you are now to abandon that principle, which for so many years has guided your commercial qualities; and supposing you to come to that resolution, whether the measure proposed by the Government is the best mode of so doing? (hear, hear). These were the grounds, my Lords, on which I hoped to have seen the measure discussed, and the only grounds. I need not say, my Lords, now at this late end of the debate, that my vote shall be given against this measure. The great argument with regard to the Corn Laws was, that in order to increase the exports of the country, it was necessary to increase the imports. He believed in that respect that the imports were regulated in a great measure by the state of the home market. Taking the population of England and Wales, they found the population to be 16,000,000, consuming each a quarter of corn. It seemed according to political economists there were twenty millions of acres of arable land in the country, of which five millions of acres were under wheat. Supposing that each acre yield three quarters—and that was less than was produced in many places he knew, but it was the average amount of corn yielded—the amount produced would be fifteen millions, being one million less than the whole required for the consumption of the population. There was but one million of quarters which were made up from Ireland and the colonies. The amount of deficiency was so small as to leave but little to be made up by importation from foreign countries (hear, hear). But the lowest food at present consumed by the people was wheaten bread. He made this statement, and he made it advisedly. It had been proved that when distress prevailed in Leeds and Sheffield, there was more wheaten bread consumed than at times when trade was flourishing; as at the latter period the consumption of butcher's meat was so much greater (hear, hear). At present therefore, even in seasons of depression, there was but 1,000,000 to make up, though in many seasons the country produced sufficient to supply its wants. But it was said that Free Trade would increase the quantity to 2,000,000 quarters, and that the great object of the change was to increase the exports of the country by encouraging large imports. There was to be an importation of 2,000,000. If so, they must displace 2,000,000 of English grown quarters, over and above the present amount; and if there was an increase of prosperity among the manufacturers of the country, then that 16,000,000 of quarters would be

too much, as butcher's meat would be substituted to a great extent for the wheaten bread at present consumed. He must here allude to what fell from the Noble Lord who sat near to him, and who stated that during many years the produce of the country was equal to its demands, and that it would be found that in this respect the present measure would be a great hardship. If this were so then how would this meet the expectations of those who expected that this measure would bring a large accession of imports. There would be periods if this were true, there would be seasons and periods in which the large supplies exported would not be required, and then away would go the principle of the manufacturing interest, who expected from this measure a large, regular, and permanent increase of trade with foreign countries (hear). The Noble Marquis also said that if they adopted this measure of Free Trade, the foreigner would regulate his supply, and there would be a regular produce for each and every year, but this was nothing more than what they had at the present moment: for the Noble Lord remarked, and truly, that under the present system the foreigner had warning when they were in distress, and when they had abundant harvests. This was just what he required; and he was, therefore, strongly favourable to the present system, but whether they had a sliding scale or not, the foreigner would always be informed as to the prices of wheat in this country (hear, hear). If they were to have foreign corn, it was better, he thought, that it should come into the country paying a small duty. But it was argued that the foreigner, having a knowledge of the state of the markets in this country, could easily stop the supplies during disturbed times; but how did this agree with one of the statements made by the Noble and Learned Lord (Brougham)? The Noble and Learned Lord stated that even when Napoleon was in the meridian of his power—when Napoleon had almost conquered the world, and had every part under his control, he could not prevent corn from coming into this country (hear, hear). There was another circumstance to which he must allude before he sat down. The Protectionists were asked why the English farmer could not compete with the foreigner. Now, he contended, in the first place that the English farmer came into the market not on fair terms with the foreigner. He was as convinced of this as he was living at that moment (hear, hear, hear). In balancing the trade of the country, the English farmer brought 16,000,000 quarters of corn into the market, while the foreigner only brought 2,000,000 or 3,000,000—the one, however, came positively loaded with taxation, while the foreigner came in free. The English farmer had, perhaps, to pay 4s. or 5s. in the shape of direct taxation upon every quarter of his wheat, and yet he had to compete with the foreigner who paid no tax whatever. Besides his Noble and Learned Friend knew little or nothing of Russia, or he never would have made the statement he did with regard to it. Instead of Russia being in the position it was, the land was already clear and ready for plough. It required neither manure or any thing else, and it only wanted for the seed being thrown on the land (hear, hear). If this measure was passed they would be compelled to make up a sufficient number of quarters of foreign wheat, and having no bonded system,

you will then be driven to extreme distress. Then would happen that grievous object for which they appear to strive, namely, the market will be only supplied just with what it wanted for the moment. Then, if anything sudden were to happen to the country to check this system, so that this importation could not take place, what would become of the country? Under the present law there was always a sufficient quantity in bond to supply the deficiency, in case of an accident of this kind. He had a few words to say with reference to the question of population in extensive districts. There was no doubt that whatever the population was, there must be a great demand for labour. In this country, however, the population was very dense, so that there was a great supply rather than a deficiency; therefore, the whole argument drawn from the circumstances of America, did not in the least apply to this country. Their Lordships must bear in mind that this country was the most densely populated country in all Europe. There was another point to which he must call their Lordships' attention, and that was the question of freight. The freights were greater from Selby and Goole to London than from Hamburgh to London. But he would refer to one point--the rental of land. The rental of this country was £17 an acre in the North Riding of Yorkshire; £13 in some parts of Wales. There were two parishes in Lancashire in which Mr. Ashworth's manufactories stood, where the rental was only £8 an acre. This fact was given in evidence by Mr. Ashworth before the Committee appointed to inquire into these matters. He would conclude by observing that he very much regretted he could not refer to other subjects which he was desirous of bringing before the attention of their Lordships.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE hoped to meet with their indulgence, while he made a few observations on the important question at present under their consideration. The debate, as far as it had yet gone, had divided itself into two considerations--the one referred to the measure itself, and the other to the conduct of those who had brought it forward. It was, he admitted, hard to endure, and painful to listen to the comments which had been made upon those who were identified with the present measure; and though he admitted the mortification he felt on finding himself in opposition to those with whom he had formerly acted, still he must admit that there was some cause for their comments which he had heard. It was not from any disrespect for their Lordships who differed from him on this question, that he would not address their Lordships at any length. He should mention to their Lordships that he had always been of opinion that the principle of protection was not to be maintained, for it was most injurious to the trade of this country. He had founded that opinion not upon any light grounds, but had formed it from an examination of the history of the commerce and the legislation of this country. That was the source from which his opinion was formed--that which his Noble Friend said he had sought for in vain--namely, the history of facts. The tariff since 1842 had placed the question of Protection beyond all doubt as to its effects and as to the necessity of its alteration. In making the statements which he now did, he made no statement at variance with the principles and opinions which he

had advocated for years. Ever since he had the fortune to take a part in the administration of affairs he had not in that time said anything but that which he now said. He remembered well that when he expressed his sentiments to the House on this question he observed many Noble Lords who differed from him, shake their heads, and others express their dissatisfaction in various ways. The opinions which he then expressed were the opinions which he maintained that night. He had for the eleven years of his public life advocated nothing at variance with those principles. He regretted that the Noble Lord (Stanley) was not in his place, because it was exceedingly distasteful to himself to reply to matter which the Noble Lord could not possibly hear or reply to. One of the statements of his Noble Friend was, that his Right Hon. Friend at the head of the Government had made it his boast that the tariff of 1842, by lowering the duties, had effected a rise of prices, and he asked how it was possible that competition should raise the prices. But that had been met by his Noble Friend (Earl Grey) at an early hour in the evening, but he (Lord Dalhousie) would merely advert to the fact. That statement had never been made by his Right Hon. Friend. All he said was that, notwithstanding the alarm exhibited by the Agricultural Members about the tariff lowering the prices, the effect of it had been to create a still increasing rise of prices. Then the Noble Lord asked what had been the effect of the tariff on the price of wool in the year 1834, during which there was a protective duty of 1s. 4d.? He held in his hand a paper, which had been laid upon the table of the House, in which the quantity and prices of the different wools was set before their Lordships. They extended from the year 1815 to the year 1845 inclusive, and it comprehended three different rates of duty. In the year 1819, he found a protective duty of  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per lb. In the period ending 1835, he found 6d. per lb. charged, and he found also that a protective duty of 1d. was charged afterwards, which was finally abolished in the year 1844. When it was proposed to impose 6d. per lb., the House was informed this would certainly be followed by a lowering of the prices. The result fully justified the expectation. In the year 1800, when the duty of  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. was proposed, the importation was 24,000,000 lbs. and the price was 2s. 6d. Under the low duty, the amount of wool imported, increased to 39,000,000 lbs., and the price was 1s. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. He should like to have been permitted to have gone through the various statements, but, at that late hour of the evening, he would not trouble their Lordships with the details. His Noble Friend, however, referred to the price of timber, and he would take leave to mention to the House one or two of the circumstances connected with the trade. The number of their ships had increased greatly within the last few years; and on a comparison made with respect to the number of foreign ships employed in the timber trade, he could assure their Lordships of the fact that those were unfit for any other purpose, and were kept afloat merely by the loads; besides, they freighted themselves for the merest trifle. He would beg to read an extract of a statement made at a business meeting without any other object than business. It was at a

meeting of the dock companies in Liverpool. The Chairman observed, that surprise had been expressed at an increase of one hundred thousand in the shipping in the docks, but he had to inform the proprietors that they had then to deal with hundreds of thousands, but that if there was a more politic tariff instituted by the Government in place of the present one, no one could be able to say to what extent they should have to increase their accommodation for their shipping, and that when the duties were further reduced it would not be in the power of man to divine what accommodation it would be necessary to afford. At present Liverpool was the only place boasting of 200 acres under docks with but fifteen miles of quays. His Noble Friend had laid it down as a general principle that there were high authority in favour of a continued system of Protection to corn; and he instanced no less an authority than the late Lord Chatham. Now he (Lord Dalhousie) begged to say, that though he entertained the highest possible respect for the opinion of so great a man as Lord Chatham, yet he should say, that neither that Noble Lord, nor the equally illustrious Mr. Pitt, could in the present day, under the present circumstances, stand up in defence of these protective laws; nor did he think could any other man, capable of taking a dispassionate view of the subject. He (Lord Dalhousie) would appeal with confidence to the memorable work of Lord Lauderdale, a nobleman whom he considered as one who had admirably adopted the doctrine of the present day. He might also adduce examples of men equally eminent, and in more modern times. So soon as those restrictions were removed the restrictions for the protection of corn should be removed also. The Noble Lord read a table of statistics to prove that the importation of corn into this country would not be so great as anticipated by those who opposed this measure, inasmuch as the population of other countries would be increasing; and even if it were to come in, the price at which it would be sold would not be much if at all below the price of grain in the home market. There were a number of other figures, with which he would not trouble their Lordships at that late hour, but there was one consideration which had not been sufficiently dwelt upon. He meant the increase of their own population at home. It was a fallacy to say that they could bring into cultivation a sufficient quantity of land to meet this enormous annual increase, and he would take leave to read a short extract from the report of the Sanatory Committee. The Noble Lord then read the extract, which stated that an extent of new territory, equal to the counties of Surrey, Hereford, and Cambridge, would be annually required to meet the wants of this increasing population. There were in the three kingdoms 28,000,000 at least, who, in the three years increased at the rate of 15 per cent. in ten years, or 800,000 a-year; or since this measure was introduced before Parliament an addition of 1,000 souls. Then when noble Lords spoke of new lands being brought into cultivation for the purpose of meeting the demand, they must be perfectly well aware, that it was a matter of impossibility. It was usual to treat of the United States as unbroken ground, from which any quantity of wheat could be imported into

his country. But it was well known that all the wheat districts were limited within one portion of the country, the whole lying to the extreme west, and no quantity could be shipped to this country, excepting at a very considerable cost. The Noble Lord also read extracts from some statistical documents to prove that according as the population increased in the United States so did their exports diminish. It had been objected that they were not to try this great experiment on this great country. Why it has been tried, from 1776 to 1791 we had a practical Free Trade in corn. Taxes were not as heavy, to be sure, then as they were now, but they weighed every bit as heavily on the labourer; and it was an historic truth that the labourers of this country were more heavily burdened than those of other countries. Was agriculture then in a depressed condition? On the contrary, large quantities of land were taken into cultivation. He knew he would be met by the argument, that if there was a time when those who now advocated the measure were against it, they would say why propose it now? But in answer to that, he would say that the circumstances of the country rendered it necessary, and because it would act as one of the best stimulants to employment. I do adjure your Lordships to search closely your hearts before you come to a decision upon this great question; I do adjure your Lordships in considering it to blot out from the innermost recesses of your hearts every lurking feeling of self-interest; I do implore you to dismiss from your minds every lurking prejudice, and satisfy yourselves that you are sincerely and purely anxious for securing the common good (cheers). If your Lordships adopt that course, I can anticipate with confidence the result; and I do fully believe that if your Lordships pass this measure you will ere long look back with alarm to the time when you doubted what could be its effect, and certainly look back with satisfaction to the day when you gave your sanction to it (cheers). You will look back upon it with satisfaction, because you will then be able to feel and to contemplate that you have done all that in you lies to remove a reproach upon the legislature of this country; that you have done all that in you lies to sympathize with the poor in their rugged path through life; that you have done all that in you lies to mitigate the primeval cause—that you have done all that in you lies to soften the hard fate of those whose lot it is to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow.

The DUKE OF BEAUFORT apologised for obtruding himself upon their Lordships at that advanced hour of the morning, but he felt it to be his duty to state the course he intended to pursue upon this most important occasion. He objected to the present measure on two grounds, first, because obviously impolitic; second, because it was unjust. He considered it impolitic, because it left the country dependent for the supply of food upon foreign countries. Had the measure been brought forward by Noble Lords opposite, he would not have felt so strong an objection to it. There was one case where this bill would operate most unfavourably. He had an estate in one part of the country which brought him in £5,000 a-year. His tenants were all small farmers, and he could turn not them off. One family had been for three hundred years on that estate, and the other had

been for four hundred years. He felt prouder of those tenants than of any ancestral honours he could boast of, and he would rather cut his arm off than part with one of them (cheers). The Noble and Learned Lord, who spoke on the other evening, said that the tenant-farmers were perfectly indifferent in this matter. The Noble and Learned Lord was a great authority on most questions, and he (the Duke of Beaufort) was always very willing to concede to his opinion; but in this instance he must dissent from him.

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON—I cannot allow, my Lords, that this question should be put from the Woolsack without addressing a few words upon the vote which you are about to give. I address you under many disadvantages; under that of appearing before you as a Minister of the Crown, pressing this measure on your adoption, which I know to be disagreeable to all with whom I have been living in terms of personal intimacy and friendship. But I felt myself bound in duty to my Sovereign not to withhold my support upon an occasion like the present. But I have taken part with my Right Hon. Friend in this measure, because I was aware it was one which he was resolved to carry out. It is not necessary that I should enter further into a detail of the circumstances connected with this transaction. I know that I rise here to-night with a considerable degree of prejudice against me; be that as it may, I beg to tell your Lordships that the same course which I then pursued I would again pursue, if the same thing was to be done over again, and it is a course which I conceive I, in gratitude to her Majesty, in whose service I have the honour to be, am bound to take. It may be true, and perhaps it is true, that I ought to have no relation with party in this House, and that party ought to have no relation with me. That, my Lords, is just as you may think proper, but I feel satisfied with the justice of the motives by which I have been actuated; and I would be sorry to think they caused any dissatisfaction in your minds. I know I have no claim upon you for the confidence you have reposed in me for many years past—a confidence which enabled me to transact the business of this House, that has been intrusted to me from time to time. But, my Lords, I will not omit even on this night, possibly the last on which I shall ever venture to address to you any advice again—I will not omit giving you my counsel as to the vote which you should give on this occasion. My Lords, my Noble Friend, whose absence this night I lament, and who addressed you a few nights ago, urged you in the strongest manner to vote against the measure, and told you in terms, which I cannot imitate, that it was your duty to step in and protect the public from rash and inconsiderate measures which might be passed by the other House of Parliament, and which should in your opinions be inconsistent with the views and opinions of the public. My Lords, there is no doubt, whatever, that it is your duty well to consider all measures that are brought before you, and that you should give your vote upon them as you think proper, and most particularly to vote against those which appear to me rash and inconsiderate. But I beg leave to point out to your Lordships that it is your duty to consider well the consequences of any vote which you may give upon any subject in this House, and to consider well the situation in which

you place this House by the votes which you give. My Lords, this has been the practice of the House on previous occasions, and I have myself more than once prevailed upon the House to vote for measures upon which the Members of the other House have pronounced positive opinions. Now, my Lords, I beg you to look a little at the measure upon which you are going to give your vote, and look at the manner in which this measure has come before you, and at the consequences which are likely to follow from your rejection of it (hear, hear). It should be recollected that this measure was recommended in the Queen's speech, that it had been passed by a large majority of the House of Commons, that majority comprising more than one-half of the whole of the House of Commons. This is the more valuable, because it does not interfere in any way with her Majesty's prerogative. Noble Lords might say that in consequence of this decision of the House of Commons, the Government might be in danger. But that was not the subject of consideration, and it mattered little whether this fact was proved by the result or not, and the real consideration was whether this House should approve of the decision or not. It should be recollected that decision came from the recommendation of the Crown, that the bill was unopposed, and that it came on upon the recommendation of the other branch of the Legislature. The House of Lords stands alone, and I think that in the consideration of this question that deference ought to be paid to public opinion. If the Lords refuse to take the course of the Commons, the effect will be to reduce the power of the constitution. Let us take the effect of the rejection of this bill. I believe that the results of the rejection of the measure will be infinitely useful in bringing up the opinions of the other House of Legislature. I must conclude, in that case, that another Government would be formed, but whether there was another Government or not, this measure would again be brought before you during the next Administration. What would you do in that case? Would you reject it a second time? Do you mean to go on that way, discussing the measure in another Parliament three or four months longer? But the Noble Lord (Stanley), and the Noble Duke (Richmond), have said that Parliament should be dissolved—in order to see whether the constituencies that returned another House of Commons agreed to the measure (hear). If the Noble Lords have really so much confidence in the results of another election, and think public opinion is as much in their favour, why should they not rely on the election which in the ordinary course of the law will take place in a little more than twelve months? You might test the principle of the law which will not come into operation till after three years—in 1849. That Parliament can take into consideration this measure, without interfering with the prerogative of the Crown, or calling on the Crown to dissolve Parliament immediately. You have before you two alternatives. You may dissolve Parliament, and have the bill again brought up before you, or pass the bill now. You shall have an election before it comes into operation—when will be the proper time to appeal to Parliament to prevent the provisions of the measure coming into operation at the end of three years (cheers).

Strangers were then ordered to withdraw, and their Lordships divided, when there appeared:—

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The Bill was then ordered to be committed on the 11th of June. Their Lordships then adjourned at five o'clock, to the 4th of June.

## DIVISION--SECOND READING OF THE CORN BILL.

MAY 28, 1846.

AYES—PRESENT 138.

Lord Chancellor	Jersey	Grey	St. David's
DUKES.	Erroll	Minto	Worcester
Norfolk	Home	Verulam	Lichfield
St. Albans	Haddington	St. Germain's	Oxford
Buccleuch	Galloway	Morley	Tuam
Roxburgh	Dalhousie	Howe	LORDS.
Leinster	Aberdeen	Burlington	Dacre
Wellington	Rosebery	Ripon	Camoy's
MARQUISES.	Glasgow	Granville	Byron
Winchester	Cowper	Effingham	Rollo
Huntley	Radnor	Lovelace	Kinnaird
Lansdowne	Spencer	Zetland	Montfort
Abercorn	Bathurst	Auckland	Foley
Sligo	Clarendon	Ellenborough	Carteret
Camden	Talbot	Uxbridge	Suffield
Cholmondeley	Fortesque	Bruce	Thurlow
Londonderry	Liverpool	VISCOUNTS.	Lyttleton
Conyngham	Meath	Strathallan	Calthorpe
Ormonde	Besborough	Torrington	Blayney
Clanricarde	Mornington	Sydney	Gardner
Breadalbane	Courtoun	Clifden	Rivers
Westminster	Charlemont	Hawarden	Sandys
Normanby	Clanwilliam	Canning	Crewe
EARLS.	Clare	BISHOPS.	Churchill
Devon	Leitrim	Durham	Prudhoe
Suffolk	Bandon	Lincoln	Howden
Denbigh	Rosslyn	Chester	Glenlyon
Westmoreland	Craven	Ripon	Delamere
Essex	Romney	Salisbury	Forester
Shaftesbury	Chichester	Norwich	Wharncliffe
Scarborough	Gosford	Hereford	Brougham

Arben	Strafford	De Mauley	Dunfermline
Arnan	Cottenham	Wrottesley	Monteagle
Arw	Langdale	Sudeley	Keane
Arlg	Lovat	Leigh	Campbell
Arerton	Portman	Lurgan	Vivian

## PROXIES, 73.

BISHOP.	EARLS.	Camperdown	Cloncurry
Arbury	Pembroke	Lichfield	Dunally
DUKES.	Lindsey	Ducie	Abercromby
Arset	Carlisle	VISCOUNTS.	Erskine
As	Albemarle	Melbourne	Manners
Arord	Stair	Melville	Castlemaine
Arnshire	Buckingham	BISHOPS.	Downes
Arilton	Fitzwilliam	London	Bexley
Arll	Cornwallis	Carlisle	De Tabley
Arhumberland	Mt. Edgcumbe	Peterborough	Plunket
Arerland	Cork	Ely	Heytesbury
ARQUISES.	Fingall	Limerick	Talbot of Mala-
Arddale	Kingston	LORDS.	hide
Arford	Sefton	Stourton	Poltimore
Ar	Caledon	Petre	Mostyn
Ar	Kenmare	Saye and Sele	Godolphin
Ar	Rosse	Dormer	Methuen
Arhampton	De Grey	Ward	Stuart de Decies
Arsey	Dunraven	Monson	Colborne
Ar	Amherst	Wodehouse	Seaton

## NOES—PRESENT, 126.

DUKES.	Cardigan	Egmont	Cawdor
Armond	Abingdon	Longford	Munster
Aron	Eglintoun	Enniskillen	Ranfurly
Arfort	Kinnoull	Wicklow	VISCOUNTS.
Arborough	Airlie	Lucan	Hereford
Arnd	Selkirk	Wilton	Maynard
Arrose	Orkney	Limerick	Strangford
Archester	Oxford	Clancarty	Middleton
Arastle	Dartmouth	Powis	Gage
Aringham	Aylesford	Nelson	Doneraile
Arland	Stanhope	Charleville	St. Vincent
ARQUISES.	Pomfret	Manvers	Sidmouth
Arury	Ashburnham	Oxford	Lorton
Arshire	Warwick	Lonsdale	Lake
Ar	Guildford	Harewood	Exmouth
Ar	Hardwicke	Brownlow	Beresford
Armeath	Delawarr	Bradford	Combermere
EARLS.	Mansfield	Sheffield	Canterbury
Aringdon	Beverley	Eldon	Ponsonby
Arhilsea	Carnarvon	Falmouth	Hill
Arterfield	Cadogan	Somers	BISHOPS.
Arwich	Malmesbury	Stradbroke	Winchester

Bangor	Willoughby de	Berwick	Redesdale
Rochester	Broke	Sherborne	Colchester
Llandaff	St. John	Kenyon	Rayleigh
Gloucester	Saltoun	Braybrooke	Feversham
Exeter	Polwarth	Carington	Tenterden
Chichester	Sondes	Bayning	Skelmersdale
LORDS.	Boston	Bolton	Wynford
Stanley	Hawke	Northwick	Templemore
De Ros	Walsingham	Lifford	Abinger
Hastings	Southampton	Colnbrock	Ashburton
Clinton	Grantley	Crofton	De Freyne
Beaumont			

## PROXIES, 38.

DUKE.	Waldegrave	Glengall	Sinclair
Portland	Ilchester	Yarborough	Reay
EARLS.	Digby	Gainsborough	Dynevor
Shrewsbury	Shannon	VISCOUNTS.	Bagot
Poulett	Roden	Arbuthnott	Farnham
Moray	M. Cashel	De Vesci	Alvanley
Balcarres	Mayo	O'Neill	Ravenworth
Seafeld	Erne	LORDS.	De Saumarez
Ferrers	Donoughmore	Willoughby d'	BISHOPS.
Tankerville	Onslow	Eresby	St. Asaph
Macclesfield	Beauchamp	Vaux	Bath and Wells

Lord Belhaven paired for the bill, with the Earl of Lauderdale against it.

## HOUSE OF LORDS, JUNE 11.

## THURSDAY.

The EARL OF RIPON moved the order of the day for going into the committee on the Corn Law Repeal Bill.

The EARL OF STANHOPE rose to move that the bill be committed that day six months. He regarded this measure as more important than the Reform Bill, considering the magnitude of the interests involved in it, and the serious consequences which would inevitably result from it. Why was this principle of Free Trade applied to corn alone at the end of three years; why was it not applied generally to all manufactures? Let us have either the fullest Protection for every branch of British industry, or no Protection at all. This bill might bring ruin upon millions, especially those who had no other resource but their industry; and yet those who introduced it had not even formed to themselves any definite ideas upon two of the most important elements of the question—first, what was a remunerating price to the British grower; secondly, the probable price of foreign corn. After exposing the fallacy lurking in the promise of a “large loaf” held out by the advocates of a measure, the avowed object of which was to reduce the wages of the labourer,

and insisting upon the heavy losses which this experiment would inflict upon the owners and occupiers of land, Lord Stanhope showed that rent was no element in the question, for if all rent were abolished, the price of the four pound loaf would not be diminished  $\frac{3}{4}d$ . It had been suggested that their Lordships must pass this bill, because it had been proposed by the Ministers, and agreed to by the House of Commons. Such an unconstitutional doctrine had never before been proclaimed in that House; if it were true, the independence of that House was at an end; its legislative functions were useless, nay, injurious; and there would be a general cry throughout the country for its abolition. It was the duty of their Lordships to reject this bill if they wished to preserve their political existence, and unless they desired to dismember the British empire, disorganize the whole country, and surrender all its institutions to immediate destruction (hear, hear).

[During Earl Stanhope's speech Ibrahim Pacha entered the House, accompanied by his retinue, who were accommodated in one of the side galleries.]

The EARL OF RADNOR followed in defence of the bill as it stood. He had been so familiar with the gloomy predictions and anticipations of Lord Stanhope, that he did not place much confidence in them on the present occasion. The Free Trade principle had been reduced to frequent practice, and it had always succeeded. The Noble Earl then, with reference to an argument of Lord Stanley, showed that the principle of our early legislation was not the encouragement of agriculture, or for Protection, but to secure food in sufficient quantity. The system of Protection was a comparatively new one; so that the Corn Law did not possess the recommendation of being a relic of the wisdom of our ancestors. His Lordship pointed out the oppressive tax which a protective Corn Law inflicted upon the country for the sole benefit of the landowners, without any real advantage to agriculture. It was contended that this bill would be injurious to the agricultural interest, and beneficial to the manufacturers; but if any persons were interested in the prosperity of our manufacturers, it was the landed interest which should support the bill, even if the manufacturers were the only classes benefited by it, and if there were no grounds of justice for the measure. His Lordship showed that since our adoption of Free Trade principles, our shipping (contrary to the belief of Lord Stanley) had increased, and that the success of those principles had been established by the results of the tariff in respect to every article to which they had been applied (cheers).

The EARL OF WICKLOW claimed to be heard as the only Irish Peer who had hitherto offered himself to their Lordships. He avowed that he entertained sentiments upon this subject different from both parties. He conceded that Protection was not necessary to British industry, because by means of Protection our manufactures had been brought to their present state of perfection. He opposed this bill, not on the ground of Protection, but because it did not carry out the principle of Free Trade justly, equally, and fairly.

LORD LYTTLETON was convinced that the colonies need be under

no apprehension from Free Trade, the Australasian colonies in particular; Australian wheat was the best in the world. With respect to Canada, even admitting what was said as to the effect of Free Trade upon that colony, the same had been said of other interests which had been affected by our customs duties.

The DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM argued that this bill would throw land out of cultivation, reduce the wages of labourers, which ought to be increased, and compel the clergy to submit to a reduction of twenty five per cent. in their incomes. So far from settling this question, as some supposed, it would keep up agitation, and the Noble Duke believed that, if he lived a few years hence, the Minister of the day would come down to Parliament and ask again Protection for the land.

LORD COLCHESTER urged that by removing Protection we not merely would destroy our colonial trade, but would expose our manufacturers of coarse goods to be undersold by the Americans even in Manchester itself.

LORD HOWDEN, on the other side of the question, adduced the example of Spain to show the injurious effects of an Anti-Free Trade policy, and contended that the force of circumstances, independent of the justice of this measure, vindicated its expediency and wisdom.

On the motion of the MARQUIS OF EXETER, the debate was adjourned.

#### FRIDAY, JUNE 12.

The adjourned debate was resumed by the Marquis of Exeter, who, throughout his speech, spoke in a tone inaudible except to those in his immediate neighbourhood. He was understood to advocate protection as a system, and consequently to deprecate the measures of the Government.

The EARL DELAWARR, who had lately resigned the office of Lord Chamberlain, referred to the kindness with which he had been treated in a distinguished quarter, to which he dare not farther allude, but which called forth his deepest gratitude. But as an honest man he could not support the measures of the Government, in favour of which he denied that public opinion was enlisted.

The BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S said, if he was anxious to be allowed to say a few words before the debate came to a close, he could assure their Lordships that it was not because he had any intention to trouble them with a discussion of the general merits of the great question now under consideration, but simply to state the grounds of the vote he had given and meant again to give on that question. This was a subject so alien to his ordinary studies and pursuits that it was one on which he could have no claim whatever to their Lordships' attention. It was a special motive that compelled him in a manner to speak in his own defence; for their Lordships would not have forgotten that in the course of the recent discussions very numerous appeals—most pointed, emphatic, pressing, and earnest appeals, were made by a great number of Lords—he did think in a very unusual manner—to those who occupied a place in that part of their Lordships' House where he was situated (hear, hear). And their Lordships must be aware

as was every one to whom those appeals were addressed—that they were of such a nature as to involve very serious charges against those Members of their Lordships' House in that place who held the opinions he did, who had given a vote conformable to that which he had given on this question—charges involving a neglect of duty which they (the Bishops) ought to hold most sacred, and an indifference to interests which ought to be most dear to them. They appealed to the Episcopal Bench, in their quality of representatives of the rights and interests of the clergy, to give their votes against the measure which threatened to be injurious to those interests; but what was the language, and what were the professions of the same Noble Lords in other parts of their speeches? Had not every one of them most indignantly repudiated the idea of treating this as a Lord's question, or a question affecting the peculiar interests of a class? (hear, hear.) They all stood forward as the advocates of the interests of the great mass of the community, the friends of the labouring man; they cast away all considerations of private interest, all considerations affecting their own order. But must not the clergy stand in that position also? (hear, hear.) If the interests of the clergy were identical with those of the great mass of the community, then what occasion was there to bring the episcopal bench into particular notice, and appeal to them as the representatives of those particular interests? When their Lordships considered the line of argument taken by those Noble Lords—how they had represented the measure as pregnant with ruin to the institutions of the country, as well as to the labouring population, did it not border upon the ridiculous, that there should be placed in juxtaposition with those mighty interests anything so comparatively diminutive and insignificant as the effect the measure was to have upon the interests of the clergy? He placed unbounded confidence in the wisdom and justice of Parliament, and he hoped and believed that, if it should appear that the result of this measure was unfair and injurious to the people, or oppressive to any particular class of men, it would be found not beyond the reach of the wisdom and justice of Parliament to provide a remedy. Therefore he felt on every ground that he had not in the vote he had given, and which he was about to repeat, betrayed any of those interests which ought to be dear and sacred to him, while at the same time he had consulted, to the best of his poor ability and judgment, the interests of the community (hear, hear). It was, at all events, a great consolation for him to reflect that with respect to the vote he had given he found himself coinciding with men who had bestowed the most anxious and careful study on this question, and with the great majority of all the parties between which the legislature had hitherto been divided (hear, hear). He could not believe, in coming to the same conclusion with them, that he had fallen into any very great, serious, or fatal error; and with respect to those interests to which he had more particularly adverted, it would be a great consolation to him to feel that, whatever might be the result of the present measure, the conduct of the clergy with respect to it had increased for them the respect, the good-will, and the confidence of the mass of the people (cheers).

The BISHOP OF EXETER agreed with the Bishop of St. David's as

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to the disinterested conduct of the clergy, but differed wholly from him as to the probable effects of the measure. It might not be a main argument, but it was an important subsidiary one, that the temporal interests of the clergy would be affected by the bill, and to these they could not be indifferent. Good wages and good food were far better for the poor than mere cheap bread, and he believed that the effect of the bill will be to place the labouring classes on the footing of the Polish serfs, while its most ardent promoters would be completely disappointed. He hoped that their Lordships, discarding all other considerations, would act as in their judicial capacity, and, laying their hands on their hearts, say "Content," or Non-content."

The EARL OF WARWICK strongly censured the proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and condemned the Government measures.

The BISHOP OF OXFORD said: after what has fallen from my Right Rev. Friends, and from many Noble Lords, in the course of this debate, I feel it necessary, holding the opinions I entertain, and being prepared to record a similar vote to that which I have before given on that question, to trouble your Lordships with a very few plain remarks, explaining the reasons which guide me in giving my vote. I shall not follow the example of the Right Rev. Prelate (Bishop of Exeter) in disclaiming all knowledge of political economy, because some slight knowledge of it is necessary for the consideration of this subject, and if the Right Rev. Prelate says he has none, he puts himself out of the condition of the argument (hear, hear). I would rather suppose that he said this out of modesty, because the Right Rev. Prelate is a very judge and master in all other matters which come before him in his legislative capacity, and this is a matter which lies in the alphabet of political economy. On the surest principles of political economy, so far as I have been able to understand them, I approve of this measure. It is, I admit, an experiment; but when was a great measure anything else but an experiment? All legislation is but a series of experiments. You meet a certain evil by a remedy embracing the greatest probable amount of good. I look at this question, my lords, chiefly as affecting the position and habits of the working class. I say a Corn Law is unnatural. Legislation is for the most part, I admit, an interference with nature, but that legislation which as little as possible interferes with the order of nature is the best. The labourer is now prevented from being that important element in society in this country which he will be in the natural working of your altered law. What is it that makes any man more valuable in a life of labour? It is the amount of competition he has to strive against. Be he farmer or be he labourer, what is it that makes him important and valuable to those above him? It is competition; and, unless the foreign labourer competes with our own, he will never raise his present position. The condition of the working clergy has been referred to, as it will be affected by this bill. My lords, I know no class of persons who encounter more hardships and make sacrifices more cheerfully than the working clergy. I believe that in many cases a reduction in their incomes will be a reduction not merely in their luxuries, but in many cases in the essential necessities of life (hear, hear). But it is a striking circumstance that the clergy have not raised their voices anywhere

in support of the Corn Laws. This has not been from want of invitation, for they have been invited to throw themselves into the battle, and they would be covered by the capacious shields of their defenders. But they would not respond to the invitation, feeling that they have no ground of justice on which to resist this measure, have held a noble, dignified, self-denying silence, have refused to join in the clamour which they might most injuriously have swelled, and have set to all classes in the community an example such as it is rarely the habit or in the power of any one class to set, by showing that they knew there were interests beyond the interests of money, and a reward for themselves greater than the reward of their annual income (hear, hear). And when I say this, I admit that I think it probable that, to a certain amount, the income of the English clergy will be injured by this bill, and I do not see how that can be met except in one way, they will be made partakers in that compensation which this bill will produce in the cheapness of articles of consumption. In this assembly, I believe, is laid the main ground of British liberty. Show that you are ready to make any sacrifice—if sacrifice there be—of that which has been only given to classes, for the benefit of the people around. Your power is indeed great; but there are some things which it cannot affect. It cannot stand, my Lords, against the rising tide of a great nation's conviction. Do not think, therefore, that even you can set your curule chairs on the edge of the rising waters, and think that you can bid them, on a principle of hereditary prescription, recede and fall back from your feet. Do not, my Lords, set this House in a position in which it shall seem to represent the hereditary wealth, and not the hereditary justice, wisdom, and virtue of this mighty people (cheers).

LORD ASHBURTON said, a one-sided Free Trade would not change the policy of other nations, and could only ruin ourselves. It was evident, also, from the recent despatch of Lord Cathcart, that he entertained great apprehensions as to the result of the measure on the social and commercial interests of Canada.

LORD MONTEAGLE adduced from the population returns evidence that the non-agricultural portions of the community were rapidly accumulating, as compared with the agricultural; and this result, on the principles of political economy, was the condition of every prosperous country in which land was increasing in value and productiveness. But protective legislation retarded the natural development of this prosperity, as he showed by tracing the effects of the successive Corn Acts which have been passed since 1815, and which he contended have worked injuriously to all interests, agricultural as well as commercial.

The remainder of the evening was occupied by speeches from Lord Stanley, who predicted ruin, from Earl Grey and Lord Brougham, who replied to Lord Stanley's allegations and arguments; and from the Duke of Richmond, who attacked the Bishop of Oxford. At the close of all, Earl Stanhope's motion was negatived without a division, and it was agreed that the House should go into Committee on the following Monday.

## MONDAY, JUNE 15.

The debate on the order of the day for going into Committee was resumed by

**LORD COLVILLE**, who very shortly declared his hostility to the bill.

The **BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S**, with reference to a remark of Lord Stanley upon a former night, said, that of his public income little more than one-third was derived from a fixed payment, and as to the rest, it was subject to the reductions consequent upon any depreciation of the prices of agricultural produce, exactly in the same proportion as the incomes of any other of the clergy.

**LORD STANLEY** justified the allusion he had made by an observation which had fallen from the Bishop of St. David's that there might be an impression out of doors that their Lordships were influenced in their votes by motives of personal interest, and he insisted that there was a broad distinction between the episcopal bench and the parochial clergy in relation to the measure.

The **BISHOP OF SALISBURY** vindicated himself and his brother prelates from any suspicion that motives of personal interest could sway their opinions.

The Earl of Malmesbury, the Bishop of St. David's the Bishop of Oxford, and the Earl of Winchelsea addressed their Lordships with some warmth upon this personal matter.

The House then went into Committee on the bill, when

The **DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM** moved the omission from the first clause of the date "1st February, 1849," when the 1s. duty is to come into operation, the effect of which would be to continue a portion of the sliding scale, so that, after 1849, the duty on wheat at 48s. would be 10s. per quarter, and at 53s. and upwards 4s. He was aware that many of their Lordships were in favour of a fixed duty, instead of the remains of a sliding scale; but he still claimed their votes for the protection he proposed.

The amendment was supported by the Earls Clancarty, Stanhope, Hardwicke, and Lord Beaumont; and was opposed by the Earl of Ripon, Marquis of Bute, and Lord Kinnaird.

For the amendment	..	...	...	...	...	103
Against it	...	...	...	...	...	136

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Majority in favour of the original motion      33

## TUESDAY, JUNE 16.

The **EARL OF WICKLOW** moved an amendment in the first clause, that the duty upon wheat not the produce of our colonies, after February 1, 1849, be 5s. instead of 1s.; and if their Lordships agreed to this proposition, he should move that there be a proportionate alteration in the duty upon other grain, which was supported by Earls Carnarvon, Winchelsea, Lords De Mauley, Polwarth, and Stanley; and was opposed by Marquises Clanricarde and Lansdowne, Lords Cloncurry and Brougham, and Earl Fitzwilliam.

The Committee then divided, when the numbers were:—

For the amendment ... ..	107
Against it ... ..	140

Majority ... ..	33
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### FRIDAY, JUNE 19.

The House, after some less important business, entered again into committee upon the Corn Importation Bill, when

The **DUKE OF RICHMOND** moved the insertion of certain clauses in the bill, to allow tenants to vacate their leases, and receive compensation for unexhausted profits. The object of this amendment was to prevent the respectable body of tenant-farmers of England from being consigned to ruin, by allowing them to get rid of engagements which they had entered into on the faith of an Act of Parliament, and numerous pledges from time to time solemnly given, that protection should be the policy of the government. It was hard that men who had made their contracts when wheat was 50s. or 54s. a quarter, should be held to their lease when prices fell to 40s. (hear, hear). He proposed, therefore, within six months after the bill passed into a law, to enable tenants to give their landlord six months' notice to quit, and that then arbitrators—(and if they could not agree, the Commissioner of Enclosures of Commons was to decide)—should value unexhausted improvements. He did not propose what he was not ready to do himself; in 1842 he had made a similar offer to his tenants. The only objection he could anticipate to this amendment was, that it would lose the bill; but there was nothing in it which ought to produce that result (hear, hear).

The **EARL OF RIFON** entirely agreed with his Grace in his observations upon the character, disposition, spirit, and feelings of the respectable class of tenant-farmers, and he would support the amendment if he did not think that it would not confer a just advantage upon them, and that in its operations it would introduce the utmost possible confusion, and lead to endless litigation throughout the country (hear, hear). The Noble Duke had told their Lordships that he was prepared to relieve his tenants; no doubt every one of their Lordships would do the same (hear, hear). The amendment was, therefore, as superfluous as it was upon principle objectionable.

The **EARL OF MALMESBURY** saw all the difficulties of the amendment; but when he heard the variety of opinions as to the results of this measure, he could not allow tenants to be left in the power of their landlords, and compel them to sow under one law and reap under another (hear, hear).

The **EARL OF MORNINGTON** opposed the amendment, and spoke in favour of the bill, showing, from a variety of statements, that there had been no depreciation in the value of land since the measure had been promulgated, and that the tenant-farmers were favourable to it. He considered that the measure would not be injurious to the landed interest or to the tenant-farmers, whilst it formed a part of that scheme of Free Trade which the existing circumstances of the world and of society demanded.

The EARL OF ABINGDON, as an occupier of land as well as a landowner, believed that, unless the agricultural interest of this country was effectively protected by law, this would, indeed, become a nation of shopkeepers. The Noble Earl's speech consisted of arguments directed against the policy of the bill itself, mixed with some good-humoured allusions to his own history.

After a good deal of discussion the amendment was negatived; and the other clauses in the bill were agreed to.

The House then resumed, the bill was reported without amendments, and their Lordships adjourned.

### MONDAY, JUNE 22.

LORD ASHBURTON moved the following resolution :—" That whatever may be the alterations which it may be expedient permanently to make in the laws regulating the introduction of foreign corn, it is the opinion of this House that the sudden admission of the large quantity of wheat and wheat flour now in bond at a very low rate of duty, while the prices are moderate, and the prospect of the approaching harvest is promising, may be productive of great injury and injustice to the cultivators of the soil of the United Kingdom; and that some better provision against such a calamity should be provided than is contained in the bill now before the House"; which was supported by Lord Redesdale, and opposed by Earls Dalhousie, Grey, Ellenborough, and Wicklow.

Their Lordships divided, when there appeared—

For the resolution	...	...	...	...	47
Against it	...	...	...	...	70

Majority against the resolution	...	23
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### THURSDAY, JUNE 25.

The EARL OF RIPON moved that the Corn Importation Bill be read a third time.

The EARL OF WICKLOW said, as they were now at the last stage of these proceedings, he begged to direct the attention of Government and their Lordships generally to two points, on which, it appeared to him, that no information had been afforded to their Lordships in the course of these proceedings, and on which he thought that both to the country and their Lordships information was due from the Government. The first of these respected the promises made by the First Minister of the Crown to confer certain equivalents or compensations, which, it was stated, should accompany this measure. He referred to the proposition by which the whole of the constabulary force of that country was to be thrown on the consolidated fund, and the various counties relieved from any portion of the expense. Upon that subject they had heard no proposition of her Majesty's Government made to either House of Parliament. He, therefore thought, before they agreed to the third reading of this bill, it was incumbent on some Member of the Government to explain to their Lordships what was their intention with reference to any measure to be brought forward. He now came to the second point, which appeared to him infinitely more important. Allusion had been

occasionally made to the subject in that House, especially by his Noble Friend opposite (Lord Monteagle), but no explanation had been afforded by her Majesty's Government. When Sir R. Peel brought forward in the House of Commons his proposition for an Income-tax, he obtained the consent of the House to the tax for three years on the especial ground that he was then effecting great financial changes and extensive reductions in the Customs, which would inevitably lessen the amount of the Customs' Duties, so as to require for a certain short period a means of taxation in lieu of them. But the Right Hon. Baronet held out strong hopes to Parliament that by the end of three years those reductions would so much increase the produce of the Customs' Duties as to render it unnecessary to renew the income-tax. It was solely on this ground that the Right Hon. Baronet had obtained a three years' income-tax. The Right Hon. Baronet's promises, we knew, had remained unfulfilled, but Parliament was induced to extend the period for which the tax had been granted from a belief that by the reductions in the Customs' Duties the revenue of the country would be so increased as to make the continuance of the tax unnecessary. Before the measure passed, Ministers were bound to give their Lordships the information upon these subjects which they must possess, and he called on his Noble Friends to give him an answer on the two points he had stated, which he considered of vast importance to the country.

The EARL OF RIFON—The first question which the Noble Earl had asked was, whether it was the intention of her Majesty's Government to carry into effect those measures which were stated by them at the commencement of the present session, as being intended to accompany the alteration in the Corn Laws, and which were considered by them as measures calculated to be beneficial to the agricultural classes—not as equivalents or compensation for those alterations, but as right in themselves, and, as far as they went, tending to diminish the cost of production to those whose capital was employed in the land. The Government felt then as they had done when they proposed the measures to Parliament, and were bound to adhere to them, and though it might be quite true that they had not yet passed, he believed that some of them would not require an act of Parliament, except in so far as the sum, to be raised from the consolidated fund, instead of in other ways, was concerned. Besides this, there were other measures of considerable importance proposed with respect to the removal of paupers; but they were in themselves quite independent of the question of the Corn Laws, and would have been exceedingly good and proper measures to adopt whether the Corn Laws were passed or not. Those measures had been brought forward in the other House of Parliament, and he could not say when they would be brought up to their Lordships' House.

LORD FEVERHAM begged leave to enter his decided protest against the third reading of the bill.

The DUKE OF CLEVELAND said he merely rose to protest in the most solemn manner against the policy of the measure. After all the debate and lengthy arguments they had heard he was still of the same opinion. Scarcely had any measure ever passed the House on which so many of their Lordships had given their opinions *vis à voce*, and the occa-

sion would, on that account, be memorable in history ; but still more memorable would it be for the sacrifice of private opinion to party interest. He must say the Government had been, in his opinion, guilty of an uncalled for and thorough breach of faith (hear).

LORD GAGE said, it was not merely for rents that they opposed this measure, but for the sake of the yeoman and farmer, who would be ruined by it. The Noble and Gallant Duke opposite, while giving them his advice to yield this bill, also said that it might be the last time that he would counsel them. He had long venerated that character as displayed and illustrated in the Noble and Gallant Duke's splendid volumes of dispatches, and he deeply grieved that the last triumph of so great a General should be one over his own political friends and allies.

EARL STANHOPE urged that the measure before the House had been carried by a monstrous and unnatural combination of parties.

The EARL OF SELKIRK observed that it was said that this was to be the last time this question was to be debated in the Legislature. He did not believe that (Protectionist cheering). If his views were correct, he trusted that their Lordships would not hesitate to reconsider the subject, and to entertain fresh measures with respect to it (hear, hear).

The DUKE OF RICHMOND said that as no Noble Lord had moved that this bill be read this day six months, and that as he should be sorry to see the measure become law without some such amendment appearing upon the journals of their Lordships' House, he should take upon himself to make the motion in question (Protectionist cheers). It was out of the question that this measure should be a final one (cheers). Did they think that the great majority of the farmers and the middle classes of the country would sit down patiently under the injustice now heaped upon them? No. They would agitate—not for the miserable sliding scale of the present bill being made permanent, or for any nonsensical 4s. duty; they would agitate for an adequate degree of Protection to agriculture, and not only to agriculture, but to every species of national industry (hear, hear). He was glad that the Government were going to resign, because it would show future statesmen that they could not break the pledges which they had given with impunity (hear, hear). Although this disruption of the Cabinet might disappoint those 110 followers, he for one was not very sorry to find that those 110 gentlemen would not gain anything by their conversion.

The Amendment was then put, and negatived without a Division, and the bill was read a third time and passed.

## LORD STANLEY'S PROTEST AGAINST THE CORN BILL.

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### DISSENTIENT,—

1. Because the repeal of the Corn Laws will greatly increase the dependence of this country upon foreign countries for its supply of food, and will thereby expose it to dangers against which former statesmen have thought it essential to take legislative precautions.

2. Because there is no security nor probability that other nations will take similar steps; and this country will, therefore, not only be exposed to the risks of failure of supply consequent on a state of war, but will also be exclusively subject to an unlimited influx of corn in times of abundance, and to sudden checks whenever short crops shall reduce the ordinary supply from the exporting countries, or their Governments shall deem it necessary to take precautionary measures for their own protection, thus causing rapid and disastrous fluctuations in the markets of this country.

3. Because under a system of protection the agriculture of this country has more than kept pace with the increasing demand of its increasing population; and because it is to be apprehended that the removal of protection may throw some lands out of cultivation, and check in others the progress of improvement which has led to this satisfactory result.

4. Because it is unjust to withdraw protection from the landed interest of this country, while that interest remains subject to exclusive burdens imposed for purposes of general and not of special advantage.

5. Because the loss to be sustained by the repeal of the Corn Laws will fall most heavily on the least wealthy portion of the landed proprietors, will press immediately and severely on the tenant farmers, and through them, with ruinous consequences on the agricultural labourers.

6. Because indirectly, but not less certainly, injurious consequences will result to the manufacturing interest, and especially to the artisans and mechanics, from competition with the agricultural labourers thrown out of employment, but principally from the loss of the home market, caused by the inability of the producers of grain,

and those dependent on them, to consume manufactured goods to the same extent as heretofore.

7. Because the same cause will produce similar evil results to the tradesmen, retail dealers, and others in country towns, not themselves engaged in agricultural pursuits, but mainly dependent for their subsistence on their dealings with those who are so engaged.

8. Because the effect of a repeal of the Corn Laws will be especially injurious to Ireland, by lowering the value of her principal exports, and by still further reducing the demand for labour, the want of which is among the principal evils of her social condition.

9. Because a Free Trade in corn will cause a large and unnecessary diminution of annual income, thus impairing the revenue of the country, at the same time that it cripples the resources of those classes on whom the weight of local taxation now mainly falls.

10. Because a general reduction of prices, consequent on a reduction of the price of corn, will tend unduly to raise the monied interest at the expense of all others, and to aggravate the pressure of the national burdens.

11. Because the removal of differential duties in favour of Canadian corn is at variance with the legislative encouragement held out to that colony by Parliament, on the faith of which the colonists have laid out large sums upon the improvement of their internal navigation; and because the removal of protection will divert the traffic of the interior from the St. Lawrence and the British ports of Montreal and Quebec, to the foreign port of New York; thus throwing out of employment a large amount of British shipping, severing the commercial interests of Canada from those of the parent country, and connecting those interests most intimately with the United States of America.

12. Because the adoption of a similar system with regard to other articles of commerce, will tend to sever the strongest bond of union between this country and her colonies, will deprive the British merchant of that which is now his most certain market, and sap the foundation of that colonial system, to which, commercially and politically, this country owes much of its present greatness.

Stanley	Redesdale	Tankerville	Grantley
Richmond	Rutland	Mansfield	Loftus
Exeter	Carlton	Abinger	H. Gloucester and
Hardwicke	St. Vincent	Beaumont	Bristol
Warwick	Oxford and Mor-	Orford	Selkirk
Malmesbury	timer	Lovell and Hol-	Templemore
Lucan	Munster	land	Charleville
Stanhope	Beaufort	Sheffield	Dartmouth
G. Rochester	Berwick	Airlie	Nelson
Feversham	Eldon	Beverley	Stradbroke
Bolton	Ashburton	Colchester	Polwarth
Hastings	Gage	Pomfret	Lake
Doneraile	Cadogan	Sherborne	Willoughby
Southampton	Northwick	Graham	d'Eresby

n	H. Exeter	Digby	Bradford
urat	Buckingham	and Combermere	Vaux of Harrow.
eredale	Chandos	Colville of Culross	den
m	Delawarr	Sondes	Carnarvon
i	Canterbury	Chesterfield	Broderick
	Cleveland	Ardrossan	Crofton
stle	C. Bangor	Ranfurly	De Freyne
wrough	Manvers	Gascoigne Salis-	Cawdor
ich	Beresford	bury	Clancarty
i	Somers	Orkney	Lorton

# NUMBER OF PRIVATE BILLS PASSED

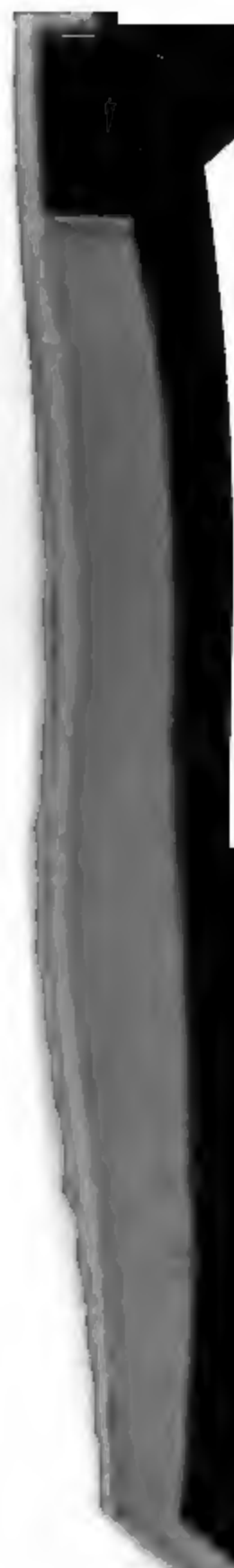
FROM 1828 TO 1846 INCLUSIVE.

BILLS PASSED	1828.	1829.	1830.	1831.	1832.	1833.	1834.	1835.	1836.	1837.	1838.	1839.	1840.	1841.	1842.	1843.	1844.	1845.	1846.
Agriculture .....	19	26	25	19	16	19	18	5	11	12	21	22	15	25	12	15	11	6	10
Companies .....	2	6	2	3	3	10	9	3	11	6	2	3	14	10	10	5	10	9	10
Improvements of towns & districts	39	42	39	27	34	24	42	42	45	41	42	46	46	44	34	49	26	50	79
Internal communi- cation .....	83	83	83	100	64	81	37	56	67	68	46	49	59	48	50	42	51	127	277
Navigation .....	6	5	11	5	6	3	7	10	17	14	8	8	10	13	18	12	16	15	25
Private regulation	35	45	48	40	35	28	29	44	42	51	33	43	43	36	47	28	47	38	54
TOTAL...	184	207	208	194	159	165	142	160	193	192	152	171	187	176	171	151	161	245	455

The average number of Private Bills passed annually during the eighteen years is 204. In the Session of

1846 the Royal Assent was given to 204 Private Bills, making a total 3672.

3672



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